

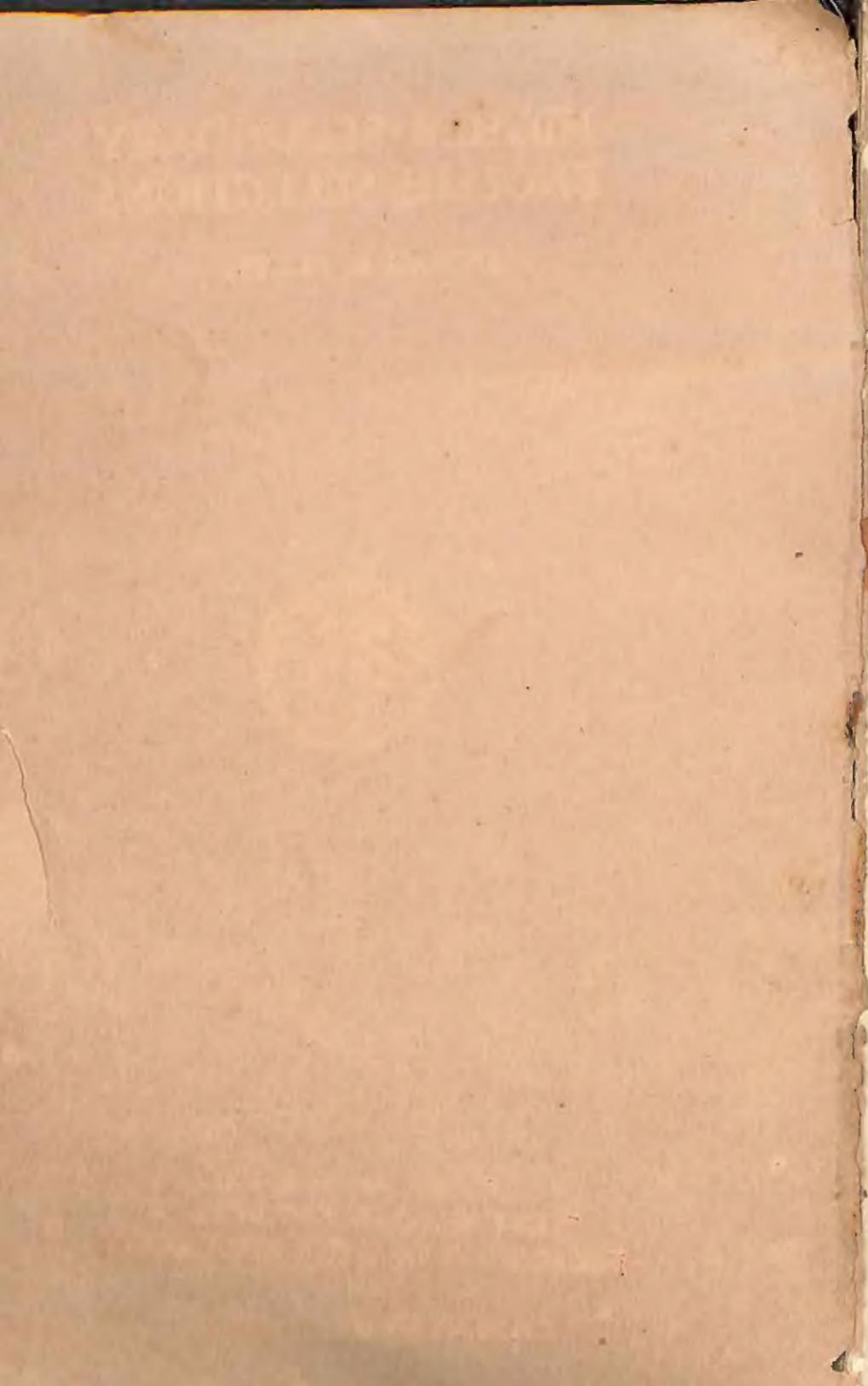
HIGHER SECONDARY ENGLISH SELECTIONS

(POEMS & PLAYS)



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Published on behalf of
**WEST BENGAL COUNCIL OF
HIGHER SECONDARY EDUCATION**
By
CALCUTTA BOOK HOUSE



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CALCUTTA BOOK HOUSE
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PREFACE

This book, intended for the Higher Secondary Stage, contains passages for the study of English as First language (L1) and Second (L2) language. The teaching objectives for the L1 and L2 groups are, however, different.

While compiling the anthology the Council circulated through its journal *The Samsad Parichiti* a number of tentative teaching objectives, and titles of pieces that might be used in realizing them, inviting comments thereon from practising teachers, among others. The comments received have greatly helped the final selection.

The comments include a complaint that for several years a number of children have been finishing school with but little command of English. This confirms our finding, arrived at through an analysis of the students performance in the Higher Secondary Examinations, that by far the largest majority of the L2 group need a great deal more practice in comprehending and writing simple English than hitherto given.

But much as we should like to take advantage of the modern methodology of teaching English as a Second/Foreign language, we cannot ignore the fact that the use of English literature as a means, if not the sole means, of mastering the language is firmly established in West Bengal.

We have attempted to avoid individual preferences in selecting appropriate texts and have aimed at a balanced and purposeful design in the syllabus. The pieces have been selected after a careful consideration of the objectives stated in the syllabus. Indeed, the passages compiled here for the L1 group are purely literary ; those for the L2 group are by and large so. We have also provided some additional materials so that the anthology may offer scope for future changes in the course ; serious and inquisitive students, if they choose to do so, may also benefit from the extra reading materials.

GROUP A SYLLABUS

The answers offered for the H. S. finals show that most of those who go in for English as their L1 have a fairly good command of the language. We have, therefore, considered it appropriate that the difficulty level of the literature they are to study measures up to the standard expected of one studying the literature in one's mother tongue at this stage. In addition to the passages to be prescribed from this book, they will be required to study standard works of

literature written in different centuries. The final examinations will require them to interpret literature in accordance with their cognitive maturity.

GROUP B SYLLABUS

For the L2 group what is now to be prescribed is not just relatively easy literary passages but, more importantly, language work on them. The details in this regard can be found in the book containing the H. S. Syllabuses, which will be published from time to time. But at this point we may urge everybody concerned with preparing this group for the H. S. finals to note that questions will be so set as to discourage memorized answers. So the students must be taught to write answers themselves rather than be given prepared answers to memorize.

The questions set on the passages from this book will require the L2 group to show a thorough acquaintance with the passages concerned : for the purposes of examination no passage, or part thereof, will be considered more or less important than the rest. No unfair demand will be made of the examinees. Those who follow the course in all its components, as set out in the syllabus, may expect to get good marks.

The weightage on the different components of the course will be so distributed as to reward every bit of learning that the student achieves. In measuring comprehension, for example, maximum credit will be given for the examinees' understanding of the given passage, while his power of precise expression in correct English will be measured by a number of different questions.

But unlike in the years past, the passages for comprehension test will be unseen, for though comprehension is of considerable value in life, such comprehension can be measured only by confronting the examinee with reading materials that he has not seen before. The unseen passages will be taken from English newspapers and other appropriate sources.

A new feature of the L2 syllabus is a list of words in phonemic transcription. The words have been stressed. As part of the L2 course, this section is intended as a beginning of the teaching of pronunciation. In the final examinations there will be a recognition (but no production) test on the words listed, though we do hope that the fairly large number of trained school teachers who will be teaching this course will demonstrate in class how words like these are correctly stressed and pronounced in speech. The transcription, however, has been included for the guidance of the teacher only.

As in the past, teaching letter-writing remains an important aim. But all our effort is now to be directed at teaching the writing of precise letters in the learner's own English. While the syllabus explains how the examinations will make this demand, suffice it to say here that topics that are best treated in essays will no longer be set for letter writing. Nor will the examinees be asked to write letters in English to persons with whom they normally communicate in their first languages. (Incidentally, it has been found that adolescents tend to run short of ideas when they are asked to write in English to their relatives and close acquaintances because, perhaps, they may not feel it as a real-life exigency. The skill is best imparted through the mother tongue.)

Since, as has been already noted, success with the text materials presented in this book will considerably depend on how effectively the learner grapples with the other parts of the course, a few words about essay-writing will be in order here. Writing long essays, like long letters, is a specialized skill which is difficult to impart to the thousands of students we have to deal with at this level. The essay for this group will mean two or three coherent paragraphs within a prescribed length.

ALTERNATIVE ENGLISH SYLLABUS

This course is a condensed version of the Group A course.

One final note. A syllabus is an on-going project. Unfortunately, in India neither the text books nor the syllabuses of which they form part can be revised as often as they are in richer countries, but the 'feedback' received meanwhile from the teachers who will be transacting the new English syllabus will be of great help when the Council can afford another revision.

Finally, we offer our sincere thanks to the learned members of the Board of Studies in English who took immense pains to construct the syllabuses and prepare the anthology keeping in view the cognitive level of the students, the infrastructural inadequacies of school plant resources, as well as the nationally accepted objectives of teaching English at the Higher Secondary stage.

ANILA DEBI
President
West Bengal Council of
Higher Secondary Education

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POEMS

Anonymous

1. HIROSHIMA

Noon, and hazy heat ;
A single silver sliver and a dull drone ;
The gloved finger poised, pressed :
A second's silence, and
Oblivion.

Matthew Arnold

2. TO MARGUERITE

Yes : in the sea of life enisl'd,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

And when the moon their hollows lights
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing ;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour ;

Oh then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent ;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent.
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our marges meet again !

Who order'd that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd ?
Who renders vain their deep desire ?—
A God, a God their severance rul'd ;
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

3. THE UNKNOWN CITIZEN

(To JS/07/M/378. THIS MARBLE MONUMENT IS ERECTED BY THE STATE)

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint.
For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
Except for the War till the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Instalment Plan
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man.
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
That he held the proper opinions for the time of year ;
When there was peace, he was for peace ; when there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the population,
Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of
his generation,
And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.
Was he free ? Was he happy ? The question is absurd :
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

4. IF I SHOULD DIE

If I should die, think only this of me :
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed ;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given ;
Her sights and sounds ; dreams happy as her day ;
And laughter, learnt of friends ; and gentleness
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

5. LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

I

Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles,
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

II

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

III

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was !
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago ;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame ;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

IV

Now,—the single little turre' that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks—
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

V

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,

And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
Melt away—
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

VI

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
All the men !
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

VII

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
Gold, of course.

Oh heart ! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns !
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin !
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest !
Love is best.

6. INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

I

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon :
 A mile or so away,
 On a little mound, Napoleon
 Stood on our storming-day ;
 With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,
 As if to balance the prone brow
 Oppressive with its mind.

II

Just as perhaps he mused, 'My plans
 That soar, to earth may fall,
 Let once my army-leader Lannes
 Waver at yonder wall,'—
 Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
 A rider, bound on bound
 Full-galloping ; nor bridle drew
 Until he reached the mound.

III

'Then off there flung in smiling joy,
 And held himself erect
 By just his horse's mane, a boy :
 You hardly could suspect—
 (So tight he kept his lips compressed,
 Scarce any blood came through,)
 You looked twice ere you saw his breast
 Was all but shot in two.

IV

‘Well,’ cried he, ‘Emperor, by God’s grace
We’ve got you Ratisbon !
The Marshal’s in the market-place,
And you’ll be there anon
To see your flag-bird flap his vans
Where I, to heart’s desire,
Perched him !’ The Chief’s eye flashed ; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

V

The Chief’s eye flashed ; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle’s eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes :
‘You’re wounded !’ ‘Nay,’ his soldier’s pride
Touched to the quick, he said :
‘I’m killed, Sire !’ And, his Chief beside,
Smiling, the boy fell dead.

7. HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris and he ;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three ;
"Good speed !" cried the watch as the gate-bolts undrew,
"Speed !" echoed the wall to us galloping through.
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Not a word to each other ; we kept the great pace,—
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place ;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the check-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

"T was a moonset at starting ; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;
At Boom a great yellow star came out to see ;
At Düffeld 't was morning as plain as could be ;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,—
So Joris broke silence with "Yet there is time !"

At Aerschot up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare through the mist at us galloping past ;
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray :

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;
And one eye's, black intelligence,—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance ;
And the thick heavy spume-flakes, which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upward in galloping on.

By Hasselt Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, "Stay spur !
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her ;
We'll remember at Aix,"—for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck, and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh ;
'Neath our feet broke the brittle, bright stubble like chaff ;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight !"

"How they'll greet us !"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buff-coat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet name, my horse without peer,—
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is friends flocking round,
As I sate with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground ;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

8. MY LAST DUCHESS

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
 Looking as if she were alive ; I call
 That piece a wonder, now : Fra Pandolf's hands
 Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
 Will't please you sit and look at her ? I said
 "Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read
 Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
 The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
 But to myself they turned (since none puts by
 The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
 And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
 How such a glance came there ; so, not the first
 Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
 Her husband's presence only, called that spot
 Of joy into the Duchess' cheek : perhaps
 Fra Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
 "Over my Lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
 "Must never hope to reproduce the faint
 Half-flush that dies along her throat ;" such stuff
 Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
 For calling up that spot of joy. She had
 A heart...how shall I say ?...too soon made glad,
 Too easily impressed ; she liked whate'er
 She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
 Sir, 'twas all one ! My favour at her breast,
 The dropping of the daylight in the West,
 The bough of cherries some officious fool
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
 She rode with round the terrace—all and each
 Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good, but thanked
 Somehow...I know not how...as if she ranked
 My gift of a nine hundred years old name
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
 This sort of trifling ? Even had you skill
 In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
 Quite clear to such an one, and say "Just this
 "Or that in you disgusts me ; here you miss,

“Or there exceed the mark”—and if she let
Herself be lessened so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E’en then would be some stooping, and I chuse
Never to stoop. Oh, Sir, she smiled, no doubt,
When’er I passed her ; but who passed without
Much the same smile ? This grew ; I gave commands ;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will’t please you rise ? We’ll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your Master’s known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed ;
Though his fair daughter’s self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we’ll go
Together down, Sir ! Notice Neptune though
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me.

9. ROLL ON, THOU DEEP AND DARK BLUE OCEAN

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll !
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain ;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore ; upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd and unknown.

His steps are not upon thy paths,—thy fields
Are not a spoil for him,—thou dost arise
And shake him from thee ; the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray
And howling, to his Gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth :—there let him lay.

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,
And monarchs tremble in their capitals,
The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make
Their clay creator the vain title take
Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war—
These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,
They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
Alike the Armada's pride or spoils of Trafalgar.

10. THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

PART I

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
"By thy long gray beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me ?

"The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin ;
The guests are met, the feast is set :
May'st hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand,
"There was a ship," quoth he.
"Hold off ! unhand me, gray-beard loon !"
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child :
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone :
He cannot choose but hear ;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

“The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
 Merrily did we drop
 Below the kirk, below the hill,
 Below the lighthouse top.

“The Sun came up upon the left,
 Out of the sea came he !
 And he shone bright, and on the right
 Went down into the sea.

“Higher and higher every day,
 Till over the mast at noon—”
 The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
 For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
 Red as a rose is she ;
 Nodding their heads before her goes
 The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
 Yet he cannot choose but hear ;
 And thus spake on that ancient man,
 The bright-eyed Mariner.

“And now the Storm-blast came ,and he
 Was tyrannous and strong :
 He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
 And chased us south along.

“With sloping masts and dipping prow,
 As who pursued with yell and blow
 Still treads the shadow of his foe,
 And forward bends his head,
 The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
 And southward aye we fled.

“And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold :
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

“And through the drifts the snowy cliffs
Did send a dismal sheen :
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

“The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around :
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound !

“At length did cross an Albatross,
Through the fog it came ;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hail'd it in God's name.

“It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit ;
The helmsman steered us through !

“And a good south wind sprung up behind ;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo !

“In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine ;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moonshine.”

“God save thee, ancient Mariner,
 From the fiends, that plague thee thus !—
 Why look’st thou so ?”—“With my cross-bow,
 I shot the Albatross.”

PART II

“The Sun now rose upon the right ;
 Out of the sea came he,
 Still hid in mist, and on the left
 Went down into the sea.

“And the good south wind still blew behind,
 But no sweet bird did follow,
 Nor any day for food or play
 Came to the mariners’ hollo !

“And I had done a hellish thing,
 And it would work ’em woe :
 For all averred, I had killed the bird
 That made the breeze to blow.
 ‘Ah wretch !’ said they, ‘the bird to slay,
 That made the breeze to blow !’

“Nor dim nor red, like God’s own head,
 The glorious Sun uprise :
 Then all aver’d, I had killed the bird
 That brought the fog and mist ;
 ‘Twas right,’ said they, ‘such birds to slay,
 That bring the fog and mist.’

“The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
 The furrow followed free ;
 We were the first that ever burst
 Into that silent sea.

“Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
’Twas sad as sad could be ;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea !

“All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

“Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion ;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

“Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink ;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

“The very deep did rot : O Christ !
The ever this should be !
Ye, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

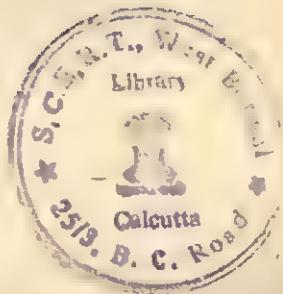
“About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night ;
The water, like a witch’s oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

“And some in dreams assured were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so ;
Nine fathom deep he had follow’d us
From the land of mist and snow.

“And every tongue, through utter drought
Was withered at the root ;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

“Ah ! well-a-day ! what evil looks
Had I from old and young !
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

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11. THE LISTENERS

‘Is there anybody there ?’ said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door :
And his horse in the silence champ’d the grasses
Of the forest’s ferny floor :
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
Above the Traveller’s head :
And he smote upon the door again a second time ;
‘Is there anybody there ?’ he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller ;
No head from the leaf-fringed-sil
Lean’d over and looked into his grey eyes,
Where he stood perplex’d and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
To that voice from the world of men ;
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,
That goes down to the empty hall,
Harkening in an air stirr’d and shaken
By the lonely Traveller’s call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
‘Neath the starr’d and leafy sky ;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
Louder, and lifted his head :—
‘Tell them I came, and no one answer’d,
That I kept my word,’ he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake :
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup.
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

12. THE DARKLING THRUSH

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleaned,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimitated ;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small
In blast be-ruffled plume,
He chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carollings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

13. IN TIME OF "THE BREAKING OF NATIONS"

I

Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

II

Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass ;
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

III

Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by :
War's annals will fade into night
Ere their story die.

14. HAWK ROOSTING

I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed,
Inaction, no falsifying dream
Between my hooked head and hooked feet :
Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

The convenience of the high trees !
The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray
Are of advantage to me ;
And the earth's face upward for my inspection.

My feet are locked upon the rough bark.
It took the whole of Creation
To produce my foot, my each feather :
Now I hold creation in my foot.

Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly—
I kill where I please because it is all mine.
There is no sophistry in my body :
My manners are tearing off heads—

The allotment of death.
For the one path of my flight is direct
Through the bones of the living.
No arguments assert my right :

The sun is behind me.
Nothing has changed since I began.
My eye has permitted no change.
I am going to keep things like this.

15. TO AUTUMN

I

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun ;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run ;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core ;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel ; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

II

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind,
Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers ;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook ;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

III

Where are the songs of Spring ? Ay, where are they ?
 Think not of them,—thou hast thy music too,—
 While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue,
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river sallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn ;
 Hedge-crickets sing, and now with treble soft
 The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft ;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

16. TO ONE WHO HAS BEEN LONG IN CITY PENT

To one who has been long in city pent,
 'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
 And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer
 Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
 Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
 Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
 Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
 And gentle tale of love and languishment ?

Returning home at evening, with an ear
 Catching the notes of Philomel,—an eye
 Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
 He mourns that day so soon has glided by :
 E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
 That falls through the clear ether silently.

17. ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told,
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne :
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold ;

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,
When a new planet swims into his ken ;
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Sidney Keyes

18. WAR POET

I am the man who looked for peace and found
My own eyes barbed.
I am the man who groped for words and found
An arrow in my hand.
I am the builder whose firm walls surround
A slipping land.
When I grow sick or mad
Mock me not nor chain me :
When I reach for the wind
Cast me not down :
Though my face is a burnt book
And a wasted town.

19. THE BEST OF SCHOOL

The blinds are drawn because of the sun,
And the boys and the room in a colourless gloom
Of underwater float : bright ripples run
Across the walls as the blinds are blown
To let the sunlight in ; and I,
As I sit on the shores of the class, alone,
Watch the boys in their summer blouses
As they write, their round heads busily bowed :
And one after another rouses
His face to look at me,
To ponder very quietly,
As seeing, he does not see.

And then he turns again, with a little, glad
Thrill of his work he turns again from me.
Having found what he wanted, having got what was to be had

And very sweet it is, while the sunlight waves
In the ripening morning, to sit alone with the class
And feel the stream of awakening ripple and pass
From me to the boys, whose brightening souls it laves
For this little hour.

This morning, sweet it is
To feel the lads' looks light on me.
Then back in a swift, bright flutter to work :
Each one darting away with his
Discovery, like birds that steal and flee

Touch after touch I feel on me
As their eyes glance at me for the grain
Of rigour they taste delightedly.

As tendrils reach out yearningly,
Slowly rotate till they touch the tree
That they cleave unto, and up which they climb
Up to their lives—so they to me.

I feel them cling and cleave to me
As vines going eagerly up, they twine
My life with other leaves, my time
Is hidden in theirs, their thrills are mine.

John Milton

20. FROM *PARADISE LOST*

What though the field be lost ?
All is not lost : the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield :
And what is else not to be overcome ?
That glory never shall his wrath or might
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee, and deify his power
Who, from the terror of this arm, so late
Doubted his empire—that were low indeed ;
That were an ignominy and shame beneath
This downfall ; since by fate the strength of gods
And this empyreal substance cannot fail ;
Since, through experience of this great event,
In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced,
We may with more successful hope resolve
To wage by force of guile eternal war,
Irreconcilable to our grand foe,
Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven.

21. FUTILITY

Move him into the sun—
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields unsown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.
Think how it wakes the seeds—
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs so dear-achieved, are sides
Full-nerved,—still warm,—too hard to stir ?
Was it for this the clay grew tall ?
—O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all ?

22. MINERS

There was a whispering in my hearth,
A sigh of the coal,
Grown wistful of a former earth
It might recall.

I listened for a tale of leaves
And smothered ferns,
Frond-forests, and the low, sly lives
Before the fawns.

My fire might show steam-phantoms simmer
From Time's old cauldron,
Before the birds made nests in summer,
Or men had children.

But the coals were murmuring of their mine,
And moans down there
Of boys that slept wry sleep, and men
Writhing for air.

And I saw white bones in the cinder-shard,
Bones without number.
For many hearts with coal are charred,
And few remember.

I thought of all that worked dark pits
Of war, and died
Digging the rock where Death reputes
Peace lies indeed :

Comforted years will set soft-chaired,
In rooms of amber,
The years will stretch their hands, well-cheered
By our life's ember ;

The centuries will burn rich loads
 With which we groaned,
 Whose warmth shall lull their dreaming lids,
 While songs are crooned ;
 But they will not dream of us poor lads
 Lost in the ground.

23. THE SEND-OFF

Down the close darkening lanes they sang their way
 To the siding-shed,
 And lined the train with faces grimly gay.

Their breasts were stuck all white with wreath and spray
 As man's are, dead.

Dull porters watched them, and a casual tramp
 Stood staring hard,
 Sorry to miss them from the upland camp.
 Then, unmoved, signals nodded, and a lamp
 Winked to the guard.

So secretly, like wrongs hushed-up, they went.
 They were not ours :
 We never heard to which front these were sent.

Nor there if they mock what women meant
 Who gave them flowers.

Shall they return to beatings of great bells
 In wild train-loads ?
 A few, a few, too few for drums and yells,
 May creep back, silent, to village wells
 Up half-known roads.

24. SEVEN AGES OF MAN

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players :
They have their exits and entrances ;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms ;
And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lin'd
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances ;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank ; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

25. THE CLOUD

I

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams ;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one.
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

II

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast :
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skyey bowers,
Lightning my pilot sits :
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
It struggles and howls at fits.
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea ;
Over the rills, and the crags and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains ;
And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

III

The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead :
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
And eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when Sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath
Its ardours of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of Heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine airy nest,
All still as a brooding dove.

IV

That orbed maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the Moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn ;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof
The stars peep behind her and peer :
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees.
When I widen the rent, in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

V

I bind the Sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the Moon's with a girdle of pearl ;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl,

From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,—
The mountains its columns be,
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire and snow,
When the Powers of the air are chained to my chair.
In the million-coloured bow ;
The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,
While the moist Earth was laughing below.

VI

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky :
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores ;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air.
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

26. MUTABILITY

The flower that smiles to-day
 To-morrow dies ;
All that we wish to stay
 Tempts and then flies ;
What is this world's delight ?
Lightning that mocks the night,
 Brief even as bright.

Virtue, how frail it is !
 Friendship how rare !
Love, how it sells poor bliss
 For proud despair !
But we, though soon they fall,
Survive their joy, and all
 Which ours we call.

Whilst skies are blue and bright,
 Whilst flowers are gay,
Whilst eyes that change ere night
 Make glad the day ;
Whilst yet the calm hours creep,
Dream thou—and from thy sleep
 Then wake to weep.

27. OZYMANDIAS IN EGYPT

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said : Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed :
And on the pedestal these words appear :
'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings :
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair !'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

28. GITANJALI : (NO. 50)

I had gone a-begging from door to door in the
village path when thy golden chariot appeared in
the distance like a gorgeous dream and I wondered
who was this king of all kings !

My hopes rose high and methought my evil days
were at an end, and I stood waiting for alms to be
given unasked and for wealth scattered on all sides
in the dust.

The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance
fell on me and thou camest down with a smile. I felt
that the luck of my life had come at last. Then
of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand
and say "What hast thou to give to me ?"

Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm
to a beggar to beg ! I was confused and stood
undecided and then from my wallet I slowly
took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee.

But how great my surprise when at the day's
end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least
little grain of gold among the poor heap. I bitterly
wept and wished that I had had the heart to give
thee my all.

29. ULYSSES

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Matched with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel : I will drink
Life to the lees : all times I have enjoyed
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone ; on shore, and when
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea. I am become a name ;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known ; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honoured of them all ;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met ;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use !
As though to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains ; but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things ; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this grey spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence, to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port ; the vessel puffs her sail ;
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old ;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil ;
Death closes all ; but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks ;
The long day wanes ; the slow moon climbs ; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows ; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down ;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides ; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven ; that which we are, we are ;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

30. CROSSING THE BAR

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me !
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark !
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark ;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

31. THE EAGLE

He clasps the crag with crooked hands ;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls ;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

Edward Thomas

32. THE OWL

Downhill I came, hungry, and yet not starved ;
Cold, yet had heat within me that was proof
Against the North wind ; tired, yet so that rest
Had seemed the sweetest thing under a roof.

Then at the inn I had food, fire, and rest.
Knowing how hungry, cold, and tired was I
All of the night was quite barred out except
An owl's cry, a most melancholy cry.

Shaken out long and clear upon the hill.
No merry note, nor cause of merriment.
But one telling me plain what I escaped
And others could not, that night, as in I went.

And salted was my food, and my repose,
Salted and sobered, too, by the bird's voice
Speaking for all who lay under the stars,
Soldiers and poor, unable to rejoice.

33. THE HILL FARMER SPEAKS

I am the farmer, stripped of love
And thought and grace by the land's hardness ;
But what I am saying over the fields'
Desolate acres, rough with dew,
Is, listen, listen, I am a man like you.

The wind goes over the hill pastures
Year after year, and the ewes starve
Milkless, for want of the new grass.
And I starve, too, for something the spring
Can never foster in veins run dry.

The pig is a friend, the cattle's breath
Mingles with mine in the still lanes ;
I wear it willingly like a cloak
To shelter me from your curious gaze.

The hens go in and out at the door
From sun to shadow, as stray thoughts pass
Over the floor of my wide skull.
The dirt is under my cracked nails ;
The tale of my life is smirched with dung ;
The phlegm rattles. But what I am saying
Over the grasses rough with dew
Is, listen, listen, I am a man like you.

34. POETS TO COME

Poets to come ! orators, singers, musicians to come !
Not to-day is to justify me and answer what I am for,
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater
than before known,
Arouse ! for you must justify me.

I myself but write one or two indicative words for the future,
I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back in the
darkness.

I am a man who, sauntering along without fully stopping,
turns a casual look upon you and then averts his face,
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,
Expecting the main things from you.

John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester

35. A SATIRE AGAINST MANKIND

Which is the basest creature, man, or beast ?
Birds feed on birds, beasts on each other prey ;
But savage man alone does man betray.
Press'd by necessity, *they* kill for food :
Man undoes man, to do himself no good.
With teeth and claws, by nature arm'd, *they* hunt
Nature's allowance, to supply their want :
But man with smiles, embraces, friendship, praise,
Inhumanly his fellow's life betrays,
With voluntary pains, works his distress :
Not through necessity, but wantonness.
For hunger, or for love, *they* bite or tear,
Whilst wretched man is still in arms for fear :
For fear he arms, and is of arms afraid :
From fear, to fear, successively betray'd.

36. SURPRISED BY JOY

Surprised by joy—impatient as the wind—
I turn'd to share the transport—Oh ! with whom
But Thee—deep buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find ?
Love, faithful love recall'd thee to my mind—
But how could I forget thee ? Through what power
Even for the least division of an hour.
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss !—That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more ;
That neither present time, nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

37. THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN

At the corner of Wood Street, when day-light appears,
Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years ;
Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
In the silence of morning the song of the Bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment : what ails her ? She sees
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees ;
Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail ;
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven : but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade :
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
And the colours have all passed away from her eyes !

38. THE SOLITARY REAPER

Behold her, single in the field,
 Yon solitary Highland Lass !
 Reaping and singing by herself ;
 Stop here, or gently pass !
 Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
 And sings a melancholy strain ;
 O listen ! for the Vale profound
 Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
 More welcome notes to weary bands
 Of travellers in some shady haunt,
 Among Arabian sands :
 A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
 In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
 Breaking the silence of the seas
 Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings ?—
 Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
 For old, unhappy, far-off things,
 And battles long ago :
 Or is it some more humble lay,
 Familiar matter of to-day ?
 Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
 That has been, and may be again ?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
 As if her song could have no ending ;
 I saw her singing at her work,
 And o'er the sickle bending ;—
 I listened, motionless and still ;
 And, as I mounted up the hill,
 The music in my heart I bore,
 Long after it was heard no more.

39. A SLUMBER DID MY SPIRIT SEAL

A slumber did my spirit seal ;
I had no human fears :
She seem'd a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force ;
She neither hears nor sees ;
Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

40. BY THE SEA

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration ; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity ;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea :
Listen ! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear Child ! dear Girl ! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine :
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year ;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we knew it not.

PLAYS



1. PROGRESS

St. John Ervine

CHARACTERS

PROFESSOR HENRY CORRIE, D. SC.

MRS MELDON

HANNAH

The scene of the play is laid in the study of Professor Henry Corrie in a remote village in the north of England on a spring day in the year 1919. The room is tidy enough, with the tidiness of a house dominated by a bachelor who is dominated by his work rather than by domestic comfort ; and on the large table near the centre of the room there is a litter of scientific apparatus employed by Professor Corrie in the experiment in which he is now engaged. On the walls of the room are a number of diagrams, showing sections of very large bombs. There is a model of a big bomb on a stand underneath one of these diagrams. There are sectional diagrams of aeroplanes and airships to be seen, and also fairly large models of aeroplanes and airships.

Professor Henry Corrie, aged between fifty and sixty, is sitting at the centre table watching a chemical process in a large retort. He has cold, humourless eyes, and his mouth, if it were not concealed by a thickish beard, would be seen to have cruel lines about it. He does not, however, impress the casual visitor as a cruel man—indeed, he seems to be a harmless, kindly, inconsequential person, completely absorbed, of course, in his work. It is when he is angry that something of his cruelty is observable—he is inclined to utter wolfish snarls if he is thwarted or hindered in any way. But the most certain sign of his fundamentally cruel character is his absorption in his scientific work. Nothing is of

greater importance to him than that, and a human being is of less consequence to him than the success of even a minor experiment.

He regards the retort very closely, muttering to himself as he does so. Sometimes his mutterings are of satisfaction, sometimes of anxiety, and once of rage that turns again to satisfaction. A knock is heard on his study door, but he does not hear it. It is repeated. He leans forward to glance more closely at the retort, and then, with a shout of pleasure, rises up and contemplates it. The knock is heard for the third time.

CORRIE. (Bending over the retort and ending the experiment.) Ah, at last, at last ! By Heaven, I've done it at last (A very loud knock on the door. He turns round in a puzzled fashion.) Eh ? Oh, oh ! Come in ! Come in !

(The door opens, and an elderly servant enters.)

SERVANT. Mrs. Meldon...

CORRIE. Yes, Yes, Hannah, what is it ?

HANNAH. Mrs. Meldon wants to know whether you'll come downstairs to tea or have it up here ?

CORRIE. Has she got back ?

HANNAH. Yes, sir. She expected you to meet her at the station, sir. She waited a long time in the cold, and then got Marshall to drive her up.

CORRIE. I meant to go, but I was busy, and then I forgot. But she's quite capable of coming home by herself.

HANNAH. Yes, sir. Will you come downstairs to tea, sir, or have it up here ?

CORRIE. The drawing-room's so cold !..Tell Mrs. Meldon I'll have it up here. I've news for her. Tell her I've good news for her. My experiment is ended, and it's a success.

HANNAH. Is it, sir ?

CORRIE. Yes—but it's no use telling you about it. You wouldn't understand.

HANNAH. No, sir.

CORRIE. But I'm a proud man, Hannah. Perhaps you'll understand that. Go and tell Mrs. Meldon.

HANNAH. Yes sir.

CORRIE. Don't forget to tell her that my experiment is a success. Or, no!—you'd better not tell her. I'll do that myself. You're sure to make a mess of it. She'll be as pleased as I am.

HANNAH. She's not very happy to-day, sir.

CORRIE. Not happy! Why? I'm happy, aren't I?

HANNAH. Well, you see, sir, it's three years ago to-day since her son was killed in the War!...

CORRIE. (*Almost forgetting his grievance*) Oh, yes! I'd forgotten that! Of course, one can't keep on thinking about these things!...

HANNAH. She does, sir.

CORRIE. I'm sorry I didn't meet her at the station. But I had to attend to my experiment, Hannah. I wish she wouldn't dwell on Eddie's death. It's not right for the living to think so much of the dead. She's a woman, of course, and a mother—a bereaved mother. We must make allowances, Hannah. That's all. Now if I tell her about my successful experiment, how would that do?

HANNAH. (*Dubiously*) I don't suppose it would make her feel any worse than she is now, sir.

CORRIE. Well, tell her to come up here and have her tea with me. See? And I'll tell her about my experiment.

HANNAH. Very good, sir.

(*She turns to go.*)

CORRIE. Oh!—and, Hannah, tell her I'm very sorry I couldn't meet her at the station. That'll break the ice a bit. Then when she realizes how important my work is and how much depends on it, she'll be all right.

HANNAH. Very good, sir. (*She goes towards the door. Then she stops and turns towards him.*) She really isn't happy, sir. Her nerves aren't at all right. You see, she can't forget, sir!

(But the Professor is back at his table, intently regarding his experiment, and, except for a grunt, he does not reply. Hannah goes out. The professor makes some calculations on paper, and then sits back in his chair regarding them with delight. His manifestations of joy are interrupted by the entrance of his sister, Mrs Meldon, aged about forty-three. She is dressed in black, partly

because she is a widow, but chiefly because of her son's death. She is a sensitive-looking woman, now plainly suffering deeply from her memories, but her nervous sensibilities give her a strength on occasions which is hardly credible. She is not a fretful, complaining woman who behaves as if she were the only person in the world who had suffered a bereavement, and when, in the course of the play, she speaks of her loss she does so with grave and beautiful dignity.)

MRS MELDON. Henry !

CORRIE. Eh ? (Turning) Oh, my dear Charlotte, I'm sorry I did not meet you at the station !...

MRS MELDON. (Seating herself by the fire) It doesn't matter, Henry. Only I thought you were coming—you said you would—and I waited a long time in the cold !...

CORRIE. Yes, I'm sorry about that, but, you see, I was busy, Charlotte. I've succeeded at last. I've got just exactly what I wanted, Charlotte. Absolutely *the* thing. This will bring fame and fortune to me. I shall be rich now, but more than that, I shall be famous. My name will live for ever. When I saw how well the experiment was going, I said to myself, 'Charlotte won't really expect me to meet her just when everything's going so right, and after all, she's a grown-up woman and she knows the way home as well as I do !' So I didn't go. I stayed here and did my work. I knew you'd understand. And it's a success, Charlotte, the greatest and most wonderful success I've ever had.

MRS MELDON. Oh, yes.

CORRIE. (Dashed) Well, you don't seem very excited about it.

MRS MELDON. Of course, I'm glad it's a success, Henry, whatever it is, but, you see, you've never told me anything about it.

CORRIE. No, that's true. I've always believed in keeping secrets to myself. Tell no one anything until you are obliged to, that's my principle. No one knows that I have been working at this thing—except myself. The secret of successful invention, Charlotte, is reticence ! But now, I can tell you what it is. The component parts are still my secret and will remain such until I can get a binding offer from some government !...

MRS MELDON. Government ! Is it a government matter ?

CORRIE. I should think it is. I shall offer it first to the British Government, of course, but if they won't pay my price, I'll offer it to somebody else. Too many inventors have been let down by the British Government, Charlotte. But they will not let me down. No. I can take care of myself. But then, when they hear what my invention is, they'll jump at it.

MRS MELDON. Will they ?

CORRIE. Of course they will, though you're quite justified in feeling sceptical about them. It was very hard to get them to use tanks in the War—very hard. These cavalry generals had to be forced to use them. They ought to be horse-knackers, instead of soldiers. And tin hats, too ! Look what a time it was before that damned War Office could be persuaded to use 'em ! ... But I'm sorry, Charlotte. I ought not to be talking about the War to you—especially to-day.

MRS MELDON. I don't mind, Henry. And, after all, the War Office isn't the War !

CORRIE. No, that's true.

MRS MELDON. What is your invention, Henry ?

CORRIE. Ah, Charlotte ! There's something interesting to talk about.

(Hannah enters with a tea-tray)

HANNAH. Here's the tea, sir.

CORRIE. Damn ! Oh, all right ! Put it down there !

(Hannah arranges the tea-tray in front of Mrs. Meldon.)

(The professor, meantime, is back at his table and his retorts and his formulae. Now and again he exclaims to himself.)

MRS MELDON. Has everything been all right, Hannah ?

HANNAH. Yes, ma'am. Gage, the gardener, brought up the wreath you ordered for the War Memorial, ma'am. I've got it in the kitchen now. Shall I fetch it for you ?

MRS MELDON. Yes, do, please, Hannah.

(And then Hannah, having finished with the tea-table, goes out.)

MRS MELDON. Come and have your tea, Henry !

CORRIE. All right ! *(But he does not stir.)*

MRS MELDON. Come along, Henry !

CORRIE. Eh ? Oh, all right ! In a minute !

MRS MELDON. Your tea will get cold if you don't come now !

CORRIE. (*Getting up and coming to the tea-table*) Oh, how women do fuss ! Your sex is most extraordinary, Charlotte. Always willing to break off things for other things. No application. No concentration. No capacity for complete, impersonal devotion. That's why no women have ever been great artists or scientists. Because they will not forsake everything and follow—well, whatever it is they ought to be following !

(*Hannah returns, carrying a bunch of flowers to which a label is attached.*)

HANNAH. Here it is, ma'am.

CORRIE. What's that ?

MRS MELDON. (*Taking the flowers from Hannah*) I ordered it from Gage to put on the War Memorial. It's for Eddie ! ...

CORRIE. Oh, yes, yes !

MRS MELDON. I shall take it down there after tea. Will you come with me ?

CORRIE. I'd like to, of course, but I really must finish up these things.

MRS MELDON. Very well, Henry. (*To Hannah*) Thank you, Hannah. I'll keep the flowers here.

(*Exit Hannah.*)

MRS MELDON. (*To her brother*) They're very beautiful, aren't they, Henry ?

CORRIE. Oh, yes ! Quite nice ! You know, Charlotte, this invention of mine—

MRS MELDON. Will you have some more tea, Henry ?

CORRIE. (*Vaguely*) Oh-h-h-h ! (*Then definitely*) Yes, Half a cup !

(*He hands the cup to her, and she fills it and returns it to him while the following speeches are uttered.*)

CORRIE. I was saying this invention of mine will revolutionize warfare.

MRS MELDON. Will it abolish warfare ?

CORRIE. Abolish war ! ... My dear Charlotte, don't be childish !

MRS MELDON. I'm very interested in that subject. It seems to

me more important than anything else in the world, Henry. You don't realize how deeply women like me feel about this... this organized butchery of boys. Look at me! I had a husband and a son when the War began. I had neither when it was over. I am a most lonely woman. ... cruelly alone!...

CORRIE. (*A little annoyed by what seems to him sentimental harping on one string*) I know, of course, that the War hit you very badly, Charlotte—what with Eddie being killed and Tom taking his death so badly!...

MRS MELDON. Tom died of a broken heart, Henry. That may sound sentimental and unscientific to you, but it's true. I sometimes wonder why I was not granted the mercy of death—why I should be compelled to live on alone!...

CORRIE. Oh, come, come, Charlotte! Not alone! No, no, not alone! You're happy enough with me, aren't you? Your only brother!...

MRS. MELDON. You're not a very good substitute for a son, Henry!

CORRIE. Well, no, I suppose not, but, still, there's no need for despair. Let me tell you about my invention.

(He puts his cup down and prepares to explain.)

MRS MELDON. Will you have some more tea?

CORRIE. No, thanks! Now, Charlotte, when I say that war ought to be revolutionized, I mean that it ought to be made more expeditious. The war we've just had lasted for a ridiculous period. Five years—or nearly five years. Perfectly preposterous. It ought not to have lasted more than five weeks.

MRS MELDON. Have you invented a means of restricting the duration of wars?

CORRIE. Well—yes, I think you might put it like that. What the combatants ought to aim at, in war, is to get the first blow in so hard that the other side immediately succumbs to it.

MRS MELDON. I see.

CORRIE. That means that the weapons of war must be made immeasurably more horrible and devastating than they now are.

MRS MELDON. More horrible! Is that possible?

CORRIE. Yes. Oh, yes ! We haven't yet reached the limits of horror in war ! Oh, dear me, no !

MRS MELDON. My son was nineteen, Henry, and he was killed in a fight of which he knew very little. That seems to me a horrible thing !

CORRIE. Oh, a mother's feelings, of course, but look at the matter from a broad point of view. Put your own feelings aside !...

MRS MELDON. I can't do that, Henry. The whole war for me comes down to this one thing, that my son, a boy new from school, was taken away from me, just when his life was beginning to open out, and killed. I'm not a clever woman, Henry. I can only feel things as they touch me and mine. Eddie was my only son, my darling, my heart's joy ! I expected so much from him—and he's gone, and there's nothing... nothing... nothing !

CORRIE. (*Being very gentle with her*) Yes, I know, Charlotte, but you really ought not to dwell too much on your sorrow. It isn't good for you. You ought to take a broad point of view. Imagine yourself a statesman !...

MRS MELDON. If Eddie had been a statesman, he would not have gone to the war. He would have compelled some other person to go.

CORRIE. Oh, now, don't be bitter, Charlotte ; don't be bitter !

MRS MELDON. My dear Henry, I'm beyond being bitter. Do you know what I discovered to-day ?

CORRIE. No.

MRS MELDON. You know I've never really known how Eddie died. I found out to-day.

CORRIE. I wish you wouldn't think so much about it.

MRS MELDON. (*With sudden passion*) I must think about it. I can't help thinking about it ! ...I met a young man in town to-day who had been in the same battalion as Eddie, and he told me about it. Poor lad, it slipped out before he realized that I hadn't known before !...

CORRIE. People oughtn't to talk so much about the War. Much better forget about it !

MRS MELDON. (*Recovering herself*) You remember the C.O. of the battalion wrote to me and said that Eddie had been killed by a

piece of shell and that he had been buried behind the line somewhere ?

CORRIE. Yes, I remember.

MRS MELDON. That comforted me very much. It made things easier to think that he wasn't... mutilated... that even when he was killed he was still my dear and beautiful boy...a soldier, buried by soldiers, in a soldier's grave !... But he wasn't buried, Henry !

CORRIE. Wasn't buried ?

MRS MELDON. No ! There was nothing to bury. The shell came and...and...there was nothing. (*They are silent for a moment or two.*) Don't you think that is horrible, Henry ? There was no decency in his death !...Oh, my God ! my God ! You tell me to take a broad point of view about that ! My son !... They'd been in a little, shallow trench, Eddie and his men, sitting there for eight days and nights, waiting and waiting and waiting ; and then a shell came right into the middle of a group of them and destroyed them...utterly destroyed them. Five of them... nothing left... nothing left !

(*She sits back in her chair and both of them are silent. Then the professor goes to his table and sits down before his papers and retorts.*)

MRS MELDON. What is your invention, Henry ?

CORRIE. Oh, I think we'd better not talk about it ! You're upset ! That chap ought not to have told you about Eddie.

MRS MELDON. He thought I knew. What is your invention ?

CORRIE. I'll tell you another time.

MRS MELDON. I'd like to know now. Something to make war more expeditious ! To end it quickly !

CORRIE. (*Swinging round to her*) Really, Charlotte, this is a most humanitarian invention. I don't believe, mind you, that wars will ever end. No. We're altogether too pugnacious, we human beings. So the only thing to do then is to make war so horrible that no nation will engage in one unless absolutely driven to it. That's where I come in. I'm going to make war horrible, really horrible !

MRS MELDON. Yes.

CORRIE. I've got something here, Charlotte... the formula for a bomb that will make war not only stupendously horrible, but will end it almost as quickly as it began.

MRS MELDON. On that table ?

(*She rises and goes to him.*)

CORRIE. Yes. I've made tests and I've worked out the formula with mathematical precision, and I've discovered a combination of gases and explosives that will obliterate thousands at once. Thousands !

MRS MELDON. Thousands ?

CORRIE. Yes.

MRS MELDON. Obliterate them...just like Eddie.

CORRIE. Oh, my dear Charlotte, you really must not be so morbid. We've got to deal with the world of fact, and if this country is going to maintain her position in the world, she will have to use every device she can employ to keep her there. I consider that I'm performing a highly patriotic act in offering this discovery to my country. Now, listen ! By means of my formula, we can make a bomb, a big bomb, not one of those little footling things the Germans used to drop on London, but an enormous bomb, full of corrosive gas, which will be dropped from a powerful aeroplane or airship—that has to be settled yet—but it's not really my job. Now, when the next war breaks out !...

MRS MELDON. The next war ?

CORRIE. Yes. I should say we'd have another in twenty or thirty years, wouldn't you ? Not more than fifty, anyhow. Well, when it comes our ultimatum will consist of a number of airships or aeroplanes dropping these big bombs on the country with which we're at war—just in the way the Japanese declared war on the Russians by blowing their ships to pieces. Only ours will be much more effective than that. The Japs only sank a few ships. We'll utterly obliterate whole cities... perhaps a whole nation.

MRS MELDON. Yes.

CORRIE. When this bomb falls, the explosion will devastate a wide tract of the district in which it falls, and at the same time will release a powerful, spreading gas, without colour or smell, which will spread over a wide area and poison every person who inhales it. They won't know that they've inhaled it until they see their bodies rotting. And nothing will save them then ! With a single bomb we could wipe out the population of a city as big as Manchester. Single bomb, Charlotte !

MRS MELDON. But that would mean everybody—men and women and children.

CORRIE. Oh, yes. After all nowadays, there is no logical distinction between a civilian and a soldier. What's the difference between the girl who makes munitions and the man who uses them in the trenches? You know, Charlotte, it's a terrific thought, to think that I can sit here at this table, with a formula written out on those sheets of paper which will enable a few men to go up into the air and wipe out a whole city. And I'm the only man in the world who knows how to do it.

MRS MELDON. Aren't there men like you in other countries using their brains for the same purpose?

CORRIE. Yes, but I don't imagine any one will discover as powerful a weapon as this. If I had made this discovery in 1914, the War would have been over before the end of that year, and there probably wouldn't be any Germans left now. They'd be an extinct race.

MRS MELDON. Perhaps an enemy of this country might make a similar discovery, Henry, and use it on us.

CORRIE. We'll have to take the risk of that. Anyhow, my discovery will be available to our people, and if a war does come along, we've only got to get our bomb dropped on them before they get theirs dropped on us, and the trick's done.

MRS MELDON. I suppose it was someone like you who invented the kind of shell that destroyed Eddie... that obliterated him!

CORRIE. (*Rising and patting her on the shoulder*) Now, now, don't go back to that subject, Charlotte. Come over here by the fire, and try and take a more cheerful view of life.

MRS MELDON. Cheerful view! My dear Henry, I sometimes wonder whether, in spite of your cleverness, you aren't really the stupidest man on earth.

CORRIE. Oh, come!

MRS MELDON. I'm not clever. It seems odd that I should be your sister, a quite ordinary, commonplace woman, with nothing in my life but my love for my husband and my son. But when I hear you telling me to take a broad statesmanlike view of my son being blown to pieces, I begin to think that you're a fool, Henry—just a dull, unimaginative, bloodless fool. And when you ask me to rejoice because you've invented a bomb that will destroy a whole city in a few minutes, I think you're... you're mad—wickedly, horribly mad.

CORRIE. My dear Charlotte !...

MRS MELDON. One moment, Henry. I want you to try and realize my point of view, the point of view of an ordinary woman without any pretensions. Think of Eddie as I think of him !...

CORRIE. This isn't good for you.

MRS MELDON. Oh, yes, it is. I go back now to the very beginning, and I think of Tom and me, very young and foolish, I suppose, but very happy, too, Henry, and our queer pleasure and fright when we knew that Eddie was coming. And I think, too, of myself, sometimes at night, awake, with Tom lying asleep beside me ; and how I thought about the little child I was going to bear him, and how I loved it and loved him for being its father, and how sure I was that it would be a boy ! I was frightened, too, sometimes, because I thought I might die and never know my son, who would grow up and have no knowledge of me. And then he was born, such a dear, little, clutching child, so terribly dependent on me. Tom was very pleased and proud, but never so pleased and proud as I was. We both watched him grow—you know how handsome he was !

CORRIE. Yes, he was a good-looking lad.

MRS MELDON. And we made plans for him. He was to be great and liked—people did like him ; even you liked him, Henry, didn't you ?

CORRIE. Yes, I... I liked him. He was an attractive boy. But don't you think—

MRS MELDON. And then he was ill. You remember how we all thought that he would die, and Tom, poor Tom, who never could express himself very aptly, went about as if he were stunned. I can't tell you what I thought then, Henry. I just can't tell you, but oh ! I prayed for him Henry—prayed for him so that my whole mind was a prayer. Well, he got better, and seemed to grow stronger, and at school he did very well. I can see him now, the first time he played in a cricket match, very pleased with his blazer, and how excited he was when he came to tell me that he had made ten runs. Ten runs he made, my little son, in his first cricket match. All the other boys of his age were very respectful to him and I was so glad when he let me walk about with him, just as if he hadn't had a triumph. And Tom was frightfully pleased, too, and gave him a sovereign !... (Her tears

overcome her, and she raises her hands to her lips in a gesture of grief.)
My little boy !...

CORRIE. This is distressing you, my dear. Don't talk about it any more.

MRS MELDON. (*Recovering herself*) He hadn't been at Oxford long when the War began, and then he went off and enlisted. We didn't know whether to be proud of him or to be angry with him, but chiefly we were proud. I loved him in his clumsy uniform and his great, rough boots, just as much as I loved him later on in his officer's uniform. And when he went off to France, I tried to be worthy of my son and not to cry. It was frightfully hard to smile, Henry, but I did smile, I felt that was what Eddie would wish me to do, not to shame him before the other people, and so I smiled and made a little silly joke about the fear of the Germans when they heard of his arrival. But I was in terror, Henry, and all the time that he was away I was in terror. The sight of a telegraph messenger made my heart sink ! ... And then he came home on his first leave, and my little son wasn't my little son any more, but a strangely grown man, young to look at, but full of extraordinary knowledge. I felt shy with him. He'd seen so much and knew so much. And then I think I felt prouder of him than ever before, because he was a man and I could depend upon him. We were very happy during that leave, Henry, so happy that I hardly had time to be miserable because it would so soon be over, and when he went back, although I cried a little when he wasn't looking, I didn't mind so much as I thought I should, because I persuaded myself to believe that he wouldn't be killed. When he had his second leave and was a captain, I was sure that he would come home to me, quite safe. Even Tom, who had always felt we should lose him, began to believe that he'd come home again. But he didn't. Immediately he got back to France, he had to go into the line, and eight days later he was killed—just obliterated, as you say, by men who had never seen him, who didn't even know that they'd killed him. And all my years of love and hope and desire and pain—gone ! I'd nursed him and cared for him and taught him little lessons and been proud of him—and then in a moment my beautiful son was... obliterated, Henry ! (*There is a slight pause while she recovers herself*). You see, don't you, Henry, that I can't take a broad view of that. I can only see my son's body mutilated and destroyed. That's all.

CORRIE. Well, of course, I quite see your point of view, Charlotte.

It is hard. I admit that. But we have to keep our feelings under control. And after all, there's the consolation that Eddie did his duty to his country. I dare say he accounted for a good many Germans ! ...

MRS MELDON. That doesn't comfort me, Henry. I can't get any pleasure out of the thought that some poor German woman is suffering just as I'm suffering. No, Henry, I feel that I should want to take sides with her against men like you !

CORRIE. Men like me !

MRS MELDON. Yes. People with broad views. Because you're such fools. Someone like me, not clever, creates a beautiful thing like my son, and you, with all your cleverness, can only destroy it. That's why I think you're a fool, Henry.

CORRIE. (*Nettled*) Well, of course, Charlotte, with your views, I can hardly expect you to appreciate me or my work, but I fancy that my countrymen, if they have any sense, will know how to value me. My bomb will make my name known to the most ignorant men in the country. People will talk about the Corrie bomb, just as they used to talk about the Mills bomb during the War. I shall have to ask for a large lump sum in payment of the invention, because a royalty wouldn't pay me at all. Mills got a royalty on each of his bombs, but then they were small and hundreds of thousands of them were used. My bombs will be big, and one of them will suffice for a city. Yes, I shall have to ask for a large lump sum. Now that they're spending several million pounds on a battleship that is generally believed to be useless, I'm entitled to ask for a very large sum for my bomb which will certainly decide the war. I wonder how much I ought to ask for ? Charlotte, how much ought I to ask for ? They won't give me what it's worth, that's absolutely certain. They might pay a quarter of a million. Charlotte, what would you ask for if you were me ?

MRS MELDON. I should ask for my son.

CORRIE. Now, now, now, Charlotte, not again, please. Not again. We must think of the future, not of the past. I don't want to ask for too much, because I shan't get it, and I don't want to ask for too little, though I shall probably get that anyhow. What do you think, Charlotte ? Do you think it would be better to let them name a price ?

MRS MELDON. I don't know.

CORRIE. Well, you might take a little interest in the matter. It's very important to me. They ought really to give me a title, too. Supposing I say a couple of hundred thousand pounds and a peerage!...

MRS MELDON. Why not say thirty pieces of silver?

CORRIE. (*Thoroughly angry*) Really, Charlotte, you're insufferable! You're absolutely insufferable! I put up with a great deal from you because you're in distress, but there are limits to endurance, you know. You haven't congratulated me, even perfunctorily, and you've made yourself and me thoroughly miserable by this... this moaning over what can't be helped. You've even made Hannah miserable. My dear Charlotte, I'm talking to you now for your good. You really ought not to let your mind dwell on things in the way you do. It isn't good for you, and it's very unpleasant for me and for others who associate with you. Your boy was killed—so were other people's boys—but we can't spend the rest of our lives in lamentation. I have my work to do!...

MRS MELDON. Your bomb?

CORRIE. Yes.

MRS MELDON. Which will make the bodies of men and women and little children rot if it does not blow them to pieces.

CORRIE. The fortune of war, my dear Charlotte. After all, what does it matter to a man whether he is blown to pieces by a bomb or stabbed to death by a bayonet? As a matter of fact, the bomb is the more merciful of the two. It isn't any use being sentimental about these things. The purpose of war is killing, and the side which kills the most people in the shortest time is going to win the wars of the future. My bomb will enable those who possess it to conduct a war in a rapid and efficient fashion. No reasonable person can deny that I have performed a service to my country in inventing this bomb for its use, and even you, if you were not distracted by what you heard this morning and the fact that this is the anniversary of Eddie's death, would agree with them.

MRS MELDON. No one but you knows the secret of your invention, Henry?

CORRIE. No—not that I am aware of.

MRS MELDON. If you were to destroy your invention, never reveal its secrets, thousands of boys like Eddie might live without fear of being destroyed ?

CORRIE. Oh, I don't know. It's a fantastic thought, that, but there's nothing in it. Other people will invent things even deadlier than my bomb.

MRS MELDON. But, Henry, if you were to suppress your invention !

CORRIE. Suppress it !

MRS MELDON. Yes, if you were to destroy your formulae, and people were to know that you'd done, perhaps you'd do a great deal to change people's hearts !...

CORRIE. My dear Charlotte, most sensible people would think I'd gone off my head. A few cranks and religious maniacs might praise me, but the average person would think I was a fool—~~besides~~ being damned unpatriotic.

MRS MELDON. Henry, I beg you to destroy your invention.

CORRIE. You what ?

MRS MELDON. I beg you to destroy it. Let that be your memorial to Eddie !...

CORRIE. My dear Charlotte, I begin to believe that grief has unhinged your mind. Destroy my invention !...

MRS MELDON. Your bomb will destroy life, Henry. I beg of you to destroy it !...

CORRIE. Rubbish, woman, rubbish.

MRS MELDON. Then I will destroy it for you !...

(She goes to the table where the retorts are and hurls the table over so that the retorts are smashed.)

CORRIE. What the hell are you doing ?

MRS MELDON. I'm destroying your foul invention.

CORRIE. *(Laughing harshly)* That won't destroy it. I've got it

all in my hand. All that you've done, Charlotte, is to make a mess on my floor. Damned silly, I call it.

(He stoops down and begins to clear up the mess.)

MRS MELDON. *(Standing behind him)* It's all in your head !

CORRIE. Of course it is. Anybody but a fool of a woman would have realized that. Making a confounded mess like this !...

MRS MELDON. It's all in your head ?

CORRIE. Yes, yes. Don't keep on repeating yourself, but come and help to clear up this mess you've made.

MRS MELDON. Henry, won't you do what I ask you ?

CORRIE. Don't be a fool. *(Looking round)*. Give me that cloth over there so that I can mop up this stuff.

(He continues to collect the pieces of broken glass, etc., while she goes towards the table where the cloth is. When she reaches the table, she sees a long knife lying there, and half unconsciously she picks it up and looks at it.)

CORRIE. *(impatiently)* Hurry up. What on earth are you doing ?

MRS MELDON. I'm looking at something--this knife !

CORRIE. Well you can look at it afterwards. Fetch the cloth now. Here's Eddie's wreath under the table. You've made a mess of it, too !

MRS MELDON. Eddie's wreath !

(She comes towards him, the knife in her hand.)

CORRIE. Yes.

MRS MELDON. If you were to give up your invention, Henry, I wouldn't mind about the wreath. Your offering would be better than mine.

CORRIE. Well I shan't. Give up my invention for a lot of damned sentiment ! Not likely !

MRS MELDON. It'll destroy life, Henry.

CORRIE. What's that got to do with it ? Give me that cloth.

(He snaps it out of her hand, but does not see the knife in her other hand.)

MRS MELDON. You won't destroy it, Henry ?

CORRIE. *(Almost in a snarl)* No !

MRS MELDON. (*Raising the knife above him*) Then I...

(*With a queer moan of despair, she drives the knife into his back. He sways a moment, uttering a choking sound, and then, clutching at the air, he pitches forward on to his face.*)

(*She stands above him, looking down on his body in a dazed way. She is crying hysterically, and suddenly she stoops and picks up the broken wreath. She holds it to her breast, and stares distractedly in front of her.*)

MRS MELDON. Eddie, dear, I had to, I had to, Eddie !...

CURTAIN

2. THE RISING OF THE MOON

Lady Gregory

CHARACTERS

SERGEANT

POLICEMAN X

POLICEMAN B

A RAGGED MAN

SCENE. *Side of a quay in a seaport town. Some posts and chains. A large barrel. Enter three policemen. Moonlight.*

(SERGEANT, who is older than the others, crosses the stage to right and looks down steps. The others put down a pastepot and unroll a bundle of placards.)

POLICEMAN B. I think this would be a good place to put up a notice. (He points to barrel.)

POLICEMAN X. Better ask him. (Calls to SERGEANT) Will this be a good place for a placard ?

(No answer)

POLICEMAN B. Will we put up a notice here on the barrel ?

(No answer)

SERGEANT. There's a flight of steps here that leads to the water. This is a place that should be minded well. If he got down here, his friends might have a boat to meet him ; they might send it in here from outside.

POLICEMAN B. Would the barrel be a good place to put a notice up ?

SERGEANT. It might ; you can put it there.

(They paste the notice up.)



SERGEANT. (*Reading it*) Dark hair—dark eyes, smooth face, height five feet five—there's not much to take hold of in that—It's a pity I had no chance of seeing him before he broke out of gaol. They say he's a wonder, that it's he makes all the plans for the whole organization. There isn't another man in Ireland would have broken gaol the way he did. He must have some friends among the gaolers.

POLICEMAN B. A hundred pounds is little enough for the Government to offer for him. You may be sure any man in the force that takes him will get promotion.

SERGEANT. I'll mind this place myself. I wouldn't wonder at all if he came this way. He might come slipping along there (*points to side of quay*), and his friends might be waiting for him there (*points down steps*), and once he got away it's little chance we'd have of finding him ; it's may be under a load of kelp he'd be in a fishing boat, and not one to help a married man that wants it to the reward.

POLICEMAN X. And if we get him itself, nothing but abuse on our heads for it from the people, and may be from our own relations.

SERGEANT. Well, we have to do our duty in the force. Haven't we the whole country depending on us to keep law and order ? It's those that are down would be up and those that are up would be down, if it wasn't for us. Well, hurry on, you have plenty of other places to placard yet, and come back here then to me. You can take the lantern. Don't be too long now. It's very lonesome here with nothing but the moon.

POLICEMAN B. It's a pity we can't stop with you. The Government should have brought more police into the town, with him in goal, and at assize time too. Well, good luck to your watch.

(*They go out.*)

SERGEANT. (*Walks up and down once or twice and looks at placard*) A hundred pounds and promotion sure. There must be a great deal of spending in a hundred pounds. It's pity some honest man not to be the better of that.

(A RAGGED MAN appears at left and tries to slip past.
SERGEANT suddenly turns.)

SERGEANT. Where are you going ?

MAN. I'm a poor ballad-singer, your honour. I thought to sell some of these (*holds out bundle of ballads*) to the sailors.
(*He goes on.*)

SERGEANT. Stop ! Didn't I tell you to stop ? You can't go on there.

MAN. Oh, very well. It's a hard thing to be poor. All the world's against the poor !

SERGEANT. Who are you ?

MAN. You'd be as wise as myself if I told you, but I don't mind. I am one Jimmy Walsh, a ballad-singer.

SERGEANT. Jimmy Walsh ? I don't know that name.

MAN. Ah, sure, they know it well enough in Ennis. Were you ever in Ennis, Sergeant ?

SERGEANT. What brought you here ?

MAN. Sure, it's to the assizes I came, thinking I might make a few shillings here or there. It's in the one train with the judges I came.

SERGEANT. Well, if you came so far, you may as well go farther, for you'll walk out of this.

MAN. I will, I will ; I'll just go on where I was going.

(Goes towards steps)

SERGEANT. Come back from those steps ; no one has leave to pass down them to-night.

MAN. I'll just sit on the top of the steps till I see will some sailor buy a ballad off me that would give me my supper. They do be late going back to the ship. It's often I saw them in Cork carried down the quay in a hand-cart.

SERGEANT. Move on, I tell you. I won't have any one lingering about the quay to-night.

MAN. Well, I'll go. It's the poor have the hard life ! Maybe yourself might like one, Sergeant. Here's a good sheet now. (Turns one over) *Content and a Pipe*—that's not much. *The Peeler and the Goat*—you wouldn't like that. *Johnny Hart*—that's a lovely song.

SERGEANT. Move on.

MAN. Ah, wait till you hear it. (sings) :

'There was a rich farmer's daughter lived near the town of Ross ;

She courted a Highland soldier, his name was Johnny Hart ;
Says the mother to her daughter, "I'll go distracted mad
If you marry that Highland soldier dressed up in Highland plaid."

SERGEANT. Stop that noise.

(MAN wraps up his ballads and shuffles towards the steps.)

SERGEANT. Where are you going ?

MAN. Sure, you told me to be going, and I am going.

SERGEANT. Don't be a fool. I didn't tell you to go that way : I told you to go back to the town.

MAN. Back to the town, is it ?

SERGEANT. (Taking him by the shoulder and shoving him before him) Here, I'll show you the way. Be off with you. What are you stopping for ?

MAN. (Who has been keeping his eye on the notice, points to it) I think I know what you're waiting for, Sergeant.

SERGEANT. What's that to you ?

MAN. And I know well the man you're waiting for—I know him well—I'll be going.

(He shuffles on.)

SERGEANT. You know him ? Come back here. What sort is he ?

MAN. Come back is it, Sergeant ? Do you want to have me killed ?

SERGEANT. Why do you say that ?

MAN. Never mind. I'm going. I wouldn't be in your shoes if the reward was ten times as much. (Goes off stage to left) Not if it was ten times as much.

SERGEANT. (Rushing after him) Come back here, come back. (Drags him back) What sort is he ? Where did you see him ?

MAN. I saw him in my own place, in the County Clare. I tell you you wouldn't like to be looking at him. You'd be afraid to be in the one place with him. There isn't a weapon he doesn't know the use of, and as to strength, his muscles are as hard as that board (slaps barrel).

SERGEANT. Is he as bad as that ?

MAN. He is then.

SERGEANT. Do you tell me so ?

MAN. There was a poor man in our place, a sergeant from Ballyvaughan.—It was with a lump of stone he did it.

SERGEANT. I never heard of that.

MAN. And you wouldn't, Sergeant. It's not everything that happens gets into the papers. And there was a policeman in plain clothes, too... It is in Limerick he was... It was after the time of the attack on the police barrack at Kilmallock... Moonlight... just like this... waterside. Nothing was known for certain.

SERGEANT. Do you say so ? It's a terrible country to belong to.

MAN. That's so, indeed ! You might be standing there looking out that way, thinking you saw him coming up this side of the quay (*points*), and he might be coming up this other side (*points*), and he'd be on you before you knew where you were.

SERGEANT. It's a whole troop of police they ought to put here to stop a man like that.

MAN. But if you'd like me to stop with you, I could be looking down this side. I could be sitting up here on this barrel.

SERGEANT. And you know him well, too ?

MAN. I'd know him a mile off, Sergeant.

SERGEANT. But you wouldn't want to share the reward ?

MAN. Is it a poor man like me, that has to be going the roads and singing in fairs, to have the name on him that he took a reward ? But you don't want me. I'll be safer in the town.

SERGEANT. Well, you can stop.

MAN. (*Getting up on barrel*) All right, Sergeant. I wonder, now, you're not tired out, Sergeant, walking up and down the way you are.

SERGEANT. If I'm tired I'm used to it.

MAN. You might have hard work before you to-night yet. Take it easy while you can. There's plenty of room up here on the barrel, and you see farther when you're higher up.

SERGEANT. Maybe so. (*Gets up beside him on barrel, facing right. They sit back to back, looking different ways.*) You made me feel a bit queer with the way you talked.

MAN. Give me a match, Sergeant. (*He gives it and man lights pipe*) ; take a draw yourself ? It'll quiet you. Wait now till I give you a light, but you needn't turn round. Don't take your eye off the quay for the life of you.

SERGEANT. Never fear, I won't. (*Lights pipe. They both smoke*). Indeed it's a hard thing to be in the force, out at night and no thanks for it, for all the danger we're in. And it's little we get but abuse from the people, and no choice but to obey our orders, and never asked when a man is sent into danger, if you are a married man with a family.

MAN. (*sings*)

'As through the hills I walked to view the hills and shamrock plain,
I stood awhile where nature smiles to view the rocks and streams,
On a matron fair I fixed my eyes beneath a fertile vale,
And she sang her song it was on the wrong of poor old Granuaile.'

SERGEANT. Stop that ; that's no song to be singing in these times.

MAN. Ah, Sergeant, I was only singing to keep my heart up. It sinks when I think of him. To think of us two sitting here, and he creeping up the quay, may be, to get to us.

SERGEANT. Are you keeping a good lookout ?

MAN. I am ; and for no reward too. Amn't I the foolish man ? But when I saw a man in trouble, I never could help trying to get him out of it. What's that ? Did something hit me ?

(*Rubs his heart*)

SERGEANT. (*Patting him on the shoulder*) You will get your reward in heaven.

MAN. I know that, I know that, Sergeant, but life is precious.

SERGEANT. Well, you can sing if it gives you more courage.

MAN. (*Sings*)

'Her head was bare, her hands and feet with iron bands were bound,
Her pensive strain and plaintive wail mingled with the evening gale,

And the song she sang with mournful air, I am old Granuaile.
Her lips so sweet that monarchs kissed...'

SERGEANT. That's not it... 'Her gown she wore was stained with gore'... That's it—you missed that.

MAN. You're right, Sergeant, so it is ; I missed it. (*Repeats line*) But to think of a man like you knowing a song like that.

SERGEANT. There's many a thing a man might know and might not have any wish for.

MAN. Now, I dare say, Sergeant, in your youth, you used to be sitting up on a wall, the way you are sitting up on this barrel now, and the other lads beside you, and you singing 'Granuaile' ?...

SERGEANT. I did then.

MAN. And the *Shan Bhean Bhocht* ?...

SERGEANT. I did then.

MAN. And the *Green on the Cape* ?

SERGEANT. That was one of them.

MAN. And may be the man you are watching for to-night used to be sitting on the wall, when he was young, and singing those same songs.... It's a queer world...

SERGEANT. Whisht !.... I think I see something coming... It's only a dog.

MAN. And isn't it a queer world ?... May be it's one of the boys you used to be singing with that time you will be arresting to-day or to-morrow, and sending into the dock...

SERGEANT. That's true indeed.

MAN. And may be one night, after you had been singing, if the other boys had told you some plan they had, some plan to free the country, you might have joined with them... and may be it is you might be in trouble now,

SERGEANT. Well, who knows but I might ? I had a great spirit in those days.

MAN. It's a queer world, Sergeant, and it's little any mother knows when she sees her child creeping on the floor what might happen to it before it has gone through its life, or who will be who in the end.

SERGEANT. That's a queer thought now, and a true thought.

Wait now till I think it out... If it wasn't for the sense I have, and for my wife and family, and for me joining the force the time I did, it might be myself now would be after breaking gaol and hiding in the dark, and it might be him that's hiding in the dark and that got out of gaol would be sitting up here where I am on this barrel... And it might be myself would be creeping up trying to make my escape from himself, and it might be himself would be keeping the law, and myself would be breaking it, and myself would be trying to put a bullet in his head, or to take up a lump of stone the way you said he did...no, that myself did... Oh ! (*Gasps. After a pause.*) What's that ? (*Grasps man's arm.*)

MAN. (*Jumps off barrel and listens, looking out over water*) It's nothing, Sergeant.

SERGEANT. I thought it might be a boat. I had a notion there might be friends of his coming about the quays with a boat.

MAN. Sergeant, I am thinking it was with the people you were, and not with the law you were, when you were a young man.

SERGEANT. Well, if I was foolish then, that time's gone.

MAN. Maybe, Sergeant, it comes into your head sometimes, in spite of your belt and your tunic, that it might have been as well for you to have followed Granuaile.

SERGEANT. It's no business of yours what I think.

MAN. Maybe, Sergeant, you'll be on the side of the country yet.

SERGEANT (*Gets off barrel*). Don't talk to me like that. I have my duties and I know them. (*Looks round*). That was a boat ; I hear the oars.

(*Goes to the steps and looks down*)

MAN. (*sings*)

'O, then, tell me, Shawn O'Farrell,
Where the gathering is to be.
In the old sp̄t by the river
Right well known to you and me !'

SERGEANT. Stop that ! Stop that, I tell you !

MAN. (*Sings louder*)

'One word more, for signal token,
Whistle up the marching tune,

With your pike upon your shoulder,
At the Rising of the Moon.'

SERGEANT. If you don't stop that, I'll arrest you.

(A whistle from below answers, repeating the air.)

SERGEANT. That's a signal. (Stands between him and steps)
You must not pass this way... Step farther back... Who are you ?
You are no ballad-singer.

MAN. You needn't ask who I am ; that placard will tell you.

(Points to placard)

SERGEANT. You are the man I am looking for.

MAN. (Takes off hat and wig. SERGEANT seizes them) I am.
There's a hundred pounds on my head. There is a friend of mine
below in a boat. He knows a safe place to bring me to.

SERGEANT. (Looking still at hat and wig) It's a pity ! It's a pity.
You deceived me. You deceived me well.

MAN. I am a friend of Granuaile. There is a hundred pounds
on my head.

SERGEANT. It's a pity, it's a pity !

MAN. Will you let me pass, or must I make you let me ?

SERGEANT. I am in the force. I will not let you pass.

MAN. I thought to do it with my tongue. (Puts hand in breast)
What is that ?

(Voice of POLICEMAN X outside) Here, this is where we left him.

SERGEANT. It's my comrades coming.

MAN. You won't betray me... the friend of Granuaile. (Slips
behind barrel).

(Voice of POLICEMAN B) That was the last of the placards.

POLICEMAN X. (As they come in) If he makes his escape, it won't
be unknown he'll make it.

(SERGEANT puts hat and wig behind his back.)

POLICEMAN B. Did any one come this way ?

SERGEANT. (After a pause) No one.

POLICEMAN B. No one at all ?

SERGEANT. No one at all.

POLICEMAN B. We had no orders to go back to the station ; we can stop along with you.

SERGEANT. I don't want you. There is nothing for you to do here.

POLICEMAN B. You bade us to come back here and keep watch with you.

SERGEANT. I'd sooner be alone. Would any man come this way and you making all that talk ? It is better the place to be quiet.

POLICEMAN B. Well, we'll leave you the lantern anyhow.
(Hands it to him)

SERGEANT. I don't want it. Bring it with you.

POLICEMAN B. You might want it. There are clouds coming up and you have the darkness of the night before you yet. I'll leave it over here on the barrel.

(Goes to barrel)

SERGEANT. Bring it with you, I tell you. No more talk.

POLICEMAN B. Well, I thought it might be a comfort to you. I often think when I have it in my hand and can be flashing it about into every dark corner (*doing so*) that it's the same as being beside the fire at home, and the bits of bogwood blazing up now and again.

(Flashes it about, now on the barrel, now on SERGEANT).

SERGEANT. (Furious) Be off, the two of you, yourselves and your lantern !

(They go out. MAN comes from behind barrel. He and SERGEANT stand looking at one another.)

SERGEANT. What are you waiting for ?

MAN. For my hat, of course, and my wig. You wouldn't wish me to get my death of cold ?

(SERGEANT gives them.)

MAN. (Going towards steps) Well, good-night, comrade, and thank you. You did me a good turn to-night, and I'm obliged to you. Maybe I'll be able to do as much for you when the small rise up and the big fall down..when we all change places at the Rising (*waves his hand and disappears*) of the Moon.

SERGEANT. (Turning his back to audience and reading placard) A hundred pounds reward ! A hundred pounds ! (Turns towards audience) I wonder, now, am I as great a fool as I think I am ?

CURTAIN

3. THE THREE WAYFARERS

Thomas Hardy

Dramatized by Thomas Hardy from his story
entitled "The Three Strangers".

CHARACTERS

THE SHEPHERD (*age 28*)

THE PARISH CONSTABLE (*age 50*)

TIMOTHY SOMMERS (*age 30*), *a condemned Sheepstealer*

JOSEPH SOMMERS (*age 32*), *his brother*

THE HANGMAN (*age 55*)

THE SERPENT PLAYER

A MAGISTRATE

A TURNKEY

THE SHEPHERD'S WIFE

A DAMSEL, *betrothed to the Constable*; *Other peasants, male and female, guests of the shepherd.*

SCENE. *The interior of a cottage near Casterbridge, Wessex.*

TIME. *A March evening at the beginning of the last century.* Ordinary rural furniture with case-clock, dresser, etc. Wide chimney and fire burning, L. Lighted candles on mantelpiece. Seat in chimney-corner, table and chair in front of fire. Centre of room clear for dancing. Broad small-paned window, C. Door, C. R., another door, R. U., Barrel on R. front.

The curtain rises on a country dance of six to ten couples. Tune : "The College Hornpipe". Figure : Three top couples six hands round and back again. Promenade with partners once round. Down the middle and

up again. Swing partners. Next couple do the same. When first couple has danced down three couples the figure starts again at top.

Dancers, The Shepherd, Shepherd's Wife, Constable, Damsel, and others of the party.

Serpent Player, Boy Fiddler etc., in corner.

Dance ceases. SHEPHERD and WIFE go to barrel, bring mugs and cups, pour out and hand to dancers and musicians. Rain heard without.

SHEPHERD. After that you must be all wishing to wet your wind-pipes. Here, neighbour, drink hearty.

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. And perhaps while we rest somebody will favour us wi' a song? There's no going home till morning if this weather lasts.

SERPENT PLAYER. Your house stands in the full stroke of the wind, too, up here at the top o' the down.

SHEPHERD. Ay, yes. 'Tis a bleak place we live in. But one gets used to it in time... Which shall it be next? Another dance or a song? (A knocking heard.)

SHEPHERD. Was that a knock? (Louder knocking.)

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. Who can it be at this time o' night and in such weather?

SHEPHERD. Walk in!

(Enter TIMOTHY SOMMERS. SHEPHERD snuffs candles and holds it up to examine visitor.)

TIMOTHY. The rain is so heavy, friends, that I ask leave to come in and rest awhile.

SHEPHERD. To be sure, stranger. And faith, you've been lucky in choosing your time, for we're having a bit of a fling in a glad cause.

TIMOTHY. And what may be this glad cause?

SHEPHERD. A birth and christening. To be sure, a man could hardly wish such a form of gladness to happen more than once a year.

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. Nor less. For 'tis best to get your family over and done with as soon as you can, so as to be all the earlier out o' the fag o't.

TIMOTHY. Well, I hope you and your good husband may not be

made unhappy either by too many or too few of such little strangers.

SHEPHERD. She won't. I think I can see another in her eye already. (SHEPHERD'S WIFE turns away.)

CONSTABLE. Late to be traipsing across the coomb—hey, stranger ?

TIMOTHY. Late it is, master, as you say. (Walks aside, wiping his face.) But those in chase of me will be later ! . . . Lord save me ! . . . I'd almost as soon have stayed to be hanged as bear the strain of this escape ! (Aside)

SHEPHERD. And what's the latest news from Casterbridge, stranger ? Going to hang-fair tomorrow, like other folk, I suppose ?

TIMOTHY. (With a start). I—hadn't heard of it.

CONSTABLE. What—not about this sheepstealer, that was tried last 'size and is waiting his awful doom in Casterbridge gaol ? Yes—he's to be turned off tomorrow morning.

TIMOTHY. I—suppose you are going with the rest ?

CONSTABLE. Well, no. As a gover'ment officer I've seen fifteen strung up, man and boy ; and there's a sameness in it after a while ; and 'tis bad for the nerves. Yes, his time is getting short.

SHEPHERD. In a few hours we shall have the folk hurrying past here to get to the sight early.

SERPENT PLAYER. 'Twasn't one of your sheep that a' stole, Shepherd.

SHEPHERD. Oh no. I haven't lost one this winter. 'Twas some farm up by Shottsford. I don't know the place at all.

SERPENT PLAYER. Who'll do the gallus job now our hangman is dead ?

CONSTABLE. They'll have to send for a new hand, I reckon.

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. Well, Heaven send that they let the poor man drop easy, though some die hard, that's true...

TIMOTHY. (to SHEPHERD'S WIFE) I'll take a seat in the chimney-corner if you've nothing to say against it, ma'am ? For I am a little moist on the side that was next the rain.

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. Ay, sure. (He enters chimney-corner and stretches out legs). Your boots are the worse for wear.

TIMOTHY. Yes—I am rather thin in the vamp. And I am not well fitted, either. I have seen some rough times lately, and have been forced to pick up what I could get in the way of wearing but I must find a suit better fitted for working days when I get home.

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. One of hereabouts ?

TIMOTHY. Not quite, ma'am. Further up the country.

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. I thought so. And so be I. And by your tongue you seem to come from my neighbourhood.

TIMOTHY. (*Hastily*) But you would hardly have heard of me. (*Blandly*). My time would be long before yours, ma'am, you see... Really if I'd not met you here as a married woman, I should have said to 'ee "My dear young girl!"

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. (*simpering*) Get along with thee !

TIMOTHY. Really, I should ! When was you married, ma'am ? Last year ?

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. I've been married five years and have three children.

TIMOTHY. No ! Impossible ! Really, married women shouldn't look such maiden deceptions. 'Tisn't moral of 'em ! Why, I won't say that I shouldn't have asked to pay my addresses to 'ee if I'd been a younger fellow and as well off as I was formerly.

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. Ah—poor man. (*To SHEPHERD, who has been helping guests to liquor.*) Pour out some for the stranger. I never met a civiller man.

TIMOTHY. (*to SHEPHERD*) There is only one thing more wanted to make me happy. And that a little baccy, which I'm sorry to say I'm out of.

SHEPHERD. I'll fill your pipe.

TIMOTHY. I must ask you to lend me a pipe likewise.

SHEPHERD. A smoker, and no pipe about 'ee ?

TIMOTHY. (*Confused*) I've dropped it somewhere on the road.

SHEPHERD. (*Handing pipe*) Hand me your baccy box—I'll fill that too, now I am about it. (*TIMOTHY SOMMERS searches pockets.*) Lost that, too ?

TIMOTHY. I'm afraid so. Give it to me in a screw of paper.

(*Lights pipe.*)

SHEPHERD. Neighbours, another dance ? Shall it be hands across this time ?

GUESTS. Ay, ay, maister—hands across.

SHEPHERD. Strike up, fiddler.

(*Country dance : two top couples hands across and back again. Down the middle and up again. Swing partners. The other couples do the same.*)

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. Get the man some more mead.

(*Knocking. TIMOTHY SOMMERS starts up and sits again. Dance ceases.*)

SHEPHERD. What—another ?

CONSTABLE. Another visitor !

SHEPHERD. Walk in !

(Enter HANGMAN, R.C.E.—bag in hand.)

HANGMAN. I must beg for a few minutes' shelter, comrades, or I shall be wetted to the skin before I reach Casterbridge.

SHEPHERD. Make yourself at home, master—make yourself at home, though you be a stranger.

(*HANGMAN removes great-coat, shakes out and hangs up hat. He advances to table by chimney-corner, deposits bag thereon and sits down outside TIMOTHY SOMMERS who nods and hands mug. Other guests play at forfeits or some silent game.*)

HANGMAN. (drinks) I knew it ! When I walked up your garden afore coming in, and saw the hives all of a row, I said to myself, "Where there's bees there's honey, and where there's honey there's mead." But mead of such a truly comfortable sort as this really didn't expect to meet my lips in my older days !

(Drinks again deeply.)

SHEPHERD. Glad you enjoy it !

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. (grudgingly) It is goodish mead, and trouble enough to make, and we can hardly afford to have it drunk wastefully ... I hardly think we shall make any more, for honey sells well, and we can make shift without such strong liquor.

HANGMAN. Oh, but you'll never have the heart ! (Drinks again)

I love mead, when 'tis old like this, as I love to go to church o' Sundays,
or relieve the poor and needy any day of the week.

TIMOTHY. Good—very good ! Ha—ha—ha !

HUNGMAN. (*Spreading himself in chair*) Well, well, as I say,
I am going to Casterbridge and to Casterbridge I must go. I
should have been almost there by this time if the rain hadn't driven
me in here ; and I am not sorry for it.

SHEPHERD. You don't live in Casterbridge, sir, seemingly ?

HUNGMAN. Not as yet ; I shortly mean to move there.

SHEPHERD. Going to set up in trade, perhaps ?

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. No, no. It is easy to see that the gentleman
is rich and don't need to work at anything.

HUNGMAN. (*after a pause*) Rich is not quite the word for me,
dame. I do work and must work. And even if I only get to Caster-
bridge by midnight I must get to work then by eight tomorrow
morning... Yes, hot or wet, blow or snow, famine or sword, my day's
work tomorrow must be done.

(TIMOTHY SOMMERS droops in agitation.)

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. Indeed ! then in spite o' seeming, you are
worse off than we ?

HUNGMAN. It lies rather in the nature of my trade, men and
maidens, it is the peculiarity of my business more than my poverty...
But really and truly, I must up and away, or I shan't get a lodging in
the town... There's time for one more draught of friendship before
I go, and I'd perform it at once if the mug were not dry.

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. Here's a mug of small. Small we call it,
though it's only the first wash of the combs.

HUNGMAN. No ! I won't spoil your first kindness by partaking
of your second.

SHEPHERD. Certainly not. We don't increase and multiply
every day, and I'll fill the mug wi' strong again ! (*Goes to barrel in
corner.*)

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. (*following him*) Why should you do this ?
He emptied it once, though it held enough for ten people, and now he's
not content with the small but must needs call for more of the strong !

And a stranger unbeknown to any of us ! For my part I don't like the look o' the man at all !

SHEPHERD. But he's in the house, my dear, and tender ! And 'tis a wet night, and our baby's christening ! Daze it, what's a cup o' mead more or less ?

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. Very well—this time then. But what's the man's calling, and where does he come from, that he should burst in like this !

SHEPHERD. I don't know. I'll ask him again. (*They return to HANGMAN, she pouring out a very small cupful, keeping the mug at a distance.*) And as to this trade of yours, what did you say it might be ? (*to HANGMAN.*)

TIMOTHY. (*affecting frankness*) Anybody may know my trade. I'm a wheelwright.

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. A very good trade for these parts.

HANGMAN. Anybody may know mine—if they've the wit to find it out.

CONSTABLE. You may mostly tell what a man is by his claws. Though I be a servant o' the crown as regards my constablership, I be a hedge-carpenter by trade, and my fingers be as full of thorns as a pin-cushion is of pins. (*TIMOTHY SOMMERS quickly hides his hands.*)

HANGMAN. True. But the oddity of my trade is that instead of setting a mark upon me, it sets a mark upon my customers !

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. That's strange ! (*Aside*) I don't like the man at all... (*To the other guests.*) Will somebody favour us with a song ?

GUESTS. (*severally*) I've got no voice... I've forgot the first verse.

HANGMAN. Well—to start the company, I'll sing one myself. (*Sings*)

“O my trade it is the rarest one,
Simple shepherds all,
My trade is a sight to see ;
For my customers I tie, and take them up on high,
And waft 'em to a far countree—
(*TIMOTHY SOMMERS drops and breaks pipe in his agitation.*)
Hee—hee !
And waft 'em to a far countree !” (*Drinks.*)

TIMOTHY. (*Sings*) "And waft 'em to a far countree!"

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. What do the man mean? (*SHEPHERD shakes head.*)

TIMOTHY. Second verse, stranger!

"My tools are but common ones (*tapping bag*).

Simple shepherds all.

My tools are no sight whereon to swing,

Are implements enough for me, Hee—hee!

Are implements enough for me."

(*Pulls end of rope from bag*. TIMOTHY SOMMERS tries to hide agitation.)

GUESTS. (*Starting*) Oh! [Damsel faints—constable catches her.]

CONSTABLE. Oh—he's the hangman!

SEVERAL. He's come to hang Tim Sommers at Casterbridge gaol tomorrow morning!

OTHERS. The man condemned for sheepstealing, what we were talking of!—the poor clockmaker who used to live at Shottsford! His family were starving, and so he went out of Shottsford by the highroad, and took a sheep in open daylight... He (*pointing to the HANGMAN*) is come from up the country to do it. Then it's he who is going to have the berth here now our man is dead!

TIMOTHY. (*Sings*) "Are implements enough for me!"

(*clinks cups with the HANGMAN*.)

HANGMAN. Next verse. (*Sings*.)

"Tomorrow is—" (*Knocking without*)

(*SHEPHERD rises. WIFE tries to prevent his speaking.*)

CONSTABLE. Another of 'em?

SEVERAL. What do it mean?

SHEPHERD. Walk in!

(*Enter JOSEPH SOMMERS, R. C., begins wiping shoes.*)

JOSEPH. Can you tell me the way to—(*starts*). My brother Timothy—escaped—sitting with his own hangman! (*Aside*.)

HANGMAN. (*Sings*)

"Tomorrow is my working day,

Simple shepherds all,—

"Tomorrow is a working day for me;

For the farmer's sheep is slain, and the lad who did it ta'en—
And on his soul may God ha' mercy ! Hee—hee !"

TIMOTHY. (*Waving cup, joins in*) "And on his soul may God ha'
mercy !"

(JOSEPH SOMMERS *aghast, staggers and nearly falls in fit.*
Exit JOSEPH SOMMERS, Slamming door.)

SHEPHERD. What man could he be ?

(*Silence. Company stare at HANGMAN. Rain without.*
TIMOTHY SOMMERS smokes unconcerned. Report of a gun.)

HANGMAN. (*jumping up*) Be jiggered ! (*Rope falls on floor.*)
The prison gun !

TIMOTHY. What does that mean ?

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. A prisoner escaped from the gaol—that's
what it means !

TIMOTHY. (*after a pause*) I've often been told that in this country
they fire a gun at such times, but I never heard it till now.

HANGMAN. I wonder if it is my man ?

SHEPHERD. Surely it is ! And surely we've seen him ! the
little man who knocked at the door by now, and quivered like a leaf
when he saw 'ee and heard your song !

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. Yes ! His teeth chattered, and the breath
went out of his body !

CONSTABLE. And his heart seemed to sink within him like a
stone.

OTHERS. And he bolted as if he'd been shot at.

TIMOTHY. True—true. His teeth chattered, and his heart
seemed to sink, and bolted as if he'd been shot at.

HANGMAN. I didn't notice it.

DAMSEL. We were all wandering what made him run off in such
a fright, and now 'tis explained ! (*Gun at slow intervals.*)

HANGMAN. Is there a parish constable here ? If so, let him step
forward. (*CONSTABLE advances, DAMSEL abandoning him reluctantly*
and sobbing over back of chair.) You are a sworn constable ?

CONSTABLE. I be, sir !

HANGMAN. Then pursue the criminal at once with assistance, and bring him back. He can't have gone far.

CONSTABLE. I will, sir—I will—when I've got my staff of office. I'll go home and get it, and come sharp here, and start in a body !

HANGMAN. Staff—never mind your staff ! The man'll be gone !

CONSTABLE. But I can't do nothing without my staff—can I, Shepherd, and Elijah and John ? No ; for there's King's royal Crown a-painted on en in yaller, and gold, and the lion and the unicorn, so as when I raise en up and hit my prisoner, 'tis made a lawful blow thereby. I wouldn't attempt to take up a man without my staff—no, not I. If I hadn't the law to give me courage, why, instead o' my taking him up he might take me up !

DAMSEL. (*clinging to him*) Don't 'ee risk your life, dear. Don't 'ee !

HANGMAN. Now I'm a King's man myself, and can give you authority enough for this. Now then, all of ye, be ready. Have ye any lanterns ?

CONSTABLE. Yes, have ye any lanterns ? I demand it.

HANGMAN. And the rest of you able-bodied men—

CONSTABLE. Able-bodied men—yes—the rest of ye !

HANGMAN. Have you some good stout staves and pitch-forks—

CONSTABLE. Staves and pitchforks, in the name of the law. And take 'em in your hands and go in quest, and do as we in authority tell ye !

(*Exeunt all, R.C. except the Women, with lanterns, staves, etc.*
Rope discovered.

Start affrighted. DAMSEL fainting. Baby cries from another room.)

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. O, my poor baby ! 'Tis of ill omen for her—all this gallows work at her christening ! I wouldn't have had her if I'd known !

(*Exeunt women. R.U. Enter stealthily TIMOTHY SOMMERS. Helps himself to food and drink.*)

TIMOTHY. Hunger will tame a lion—and a convict ! To think they should fancy my brother, the man, and not me ! (*Enter HANGMAN, R.C.*)

HANGMAN. Ah—you here, friend ? I thought you had gone to help in the capture.

TIMOTHY. And I thought you had.

HANGMAN. Well, on second thoughts, I felt there were enough to do it without me ; and such a night as it is too. Besides, 'tis the business of the Government to take care of its criminals till they reach my hands.

TIMOTHY. True—so it is. And I felt, as you did, that there were enough without me.

HANGMAN. I don't want to break my limbs running over the humps and hollows of this wild country !

TIMOTHY. Nor I neither, between you and me.

HANGMAN. These shepherd-folk are used to it—simple-minded souls, you know—stirred up to anything in a moment. They'll have him before the morning ready for me to pinion, and turn off—(*suiting action to word*)—and no trouble to me at all. Besides my fee, his clothes will fetch me a guinea or two, I hope, when I've stripped his corpse afore burial.

TIMOTHY. True, true, a guinea or two for certain. When you've stripped his corpse.

HANGMAN. By the way, I've dropped my rope somewhere. I always carry my own halter with me—the new ones they make for ye won't draw tight under the ear like an old one.

TIMOTHY. Exactly. Not like an old one, tight under the ear !
Ha—ha ! Here 'tis, sir.

(*Picking up rope.*)

HANGMAN. Thank 'ee friend. Oh, I wouldn't make a *long* strangling of it for the world. I'm too kind hearted for that.

TIMOTHY. Ve-ry kind-hearted—d—d—d ! Ha—ha—(*Edging off*) Good-bye. My way is—

HANGMAN. And my way is to Casterbridge, and it is as much as my legs will do to carry me that far. Going the same way ?

TIMOTHY. No, I'm sorry to say. I've to get home over north-ard there and I feel as you do that I must be stepping on. Good night t'ye !

HANGMAN. Good-night ! Till we meet again !

(*They shake hands.*)

TIMOTHY. Till we meet again !

(*Exeunt severally. Enter TURNKEY and MAGISTRATE.*.)

MAGISTRATE. Nobody here ?

(*Enter SHEPHERD'S WIFE, DAMSEL and other women.*)

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. They are gone in pursuit, sir.

MAGISTRATE. Ah—I think I hear them returning. Then they've caught him.

(*Enter CONSTABLE, SHEPHERD, musicians, other peasants and JOSHEPH SOMMERS.*)

CONSTABLE. Gentleman, I have brought back your man, not without risk and danger ; but everyone must do his duty. I pursued him, and when I was a safe distance, I said, "Prisoner at the bar, surrender in the name of the Saints."

SHEPHERD. The Crown, the Crown !

CONSTABLE. If you had all the weight of this understanding on your mind you'd say the wrong word perhaps ! So I said "Surrender in the name of the Crown ! We arrest 'ee on the charge of not staying in Casterbridge gaol in a decent proper manner to be hung tomorrow morning !" That's the words I said.

MAGISTRATE. Well, well—where is the man ?

CONSTABLE. He's inside the circle of able-bodied persons, sir. Men, bring forward your prisoner !

(*They advance with JOSEPH SOMMERS.*)

TURKEY. Who is this man ?

CONSTABLE. The culprit !

TURNKEY. Certainly not ! (*Re-enter HANGMAN.*)

CONSTABLE. But how can he be otherwise ? Why was he so terrified at the sight of that singing instrument of the law ?

(*Pointing to HANGMAN.*)

TURNKEY. Can't explain it. All I know is that this is not the condemned man. He's quite a different character—gaunt—dark-haired—and a voice you'd never mistake as long as you lived.

CONSTABLE. Why, souls—'twas the man in the chimney-corner !

SEVERAL. Ay—'twas the man in the chimney-corner !

MAGISTRATE. Hey ? What—haven't you got the man after all ?

CONSTABLE. Well, sir, he's the man we were in search of, that's true, and yet he's not the man we are in search of. For the man we were in search of is not the man we wanted—if you understand my everyday way, sir—for 'twas the man in the chimney-corner !

MAGISTRATE. A pretty kettle of fish, altogether ! You had better start for the other man at once.

JOSEPH. Sir, the time has come when I might as well speak. I have done nothing ; my crime is that the condemned man is my brother.

SEVERAL. His brother !

JOSEPH. Yes. Early this afternoon I left home to tramp to Casterbridge gaol to bid him farewell ! I was benighted and called here to rest and ask the way.

HANGMAN. Like myself.

JOSEPH. When I opened the door I saw before me the very man, sir, my brother, Tim, that I thought to see in the condemned cell at Casterbridge. He was in this chimney-corner and jammed close to him was the executioner who had come to take his life—

HANGMAN. According to law, according to law !

JOSEPH. And singing a song about it, and my brother joining in to save appearances.

HANGMAN. A deceitful rascal ! How I do despise a man who won't die legal.

JOSEPH. Tim threw a look of agony upon me, sir, and I knew it meant "Don't reveal what you see—my life depends on it !" I was so terrified that I turned and hurried away.

MAGISTRATE. And do you know where your brother is at present ?

JOSEPH. I do not. I have not seen him since I closed the door.

CONSTABLE. I can testify to that. We kept well between 'em with our weapons, at a safe distance.

MAGISTRATE. Where does he think to fly to—what's his occupation ?

JOSEPH. A watch-and-clock maker, sir.

CONSTABLE. 'A said 'a was a wheelwright—a wicked rogue !

SHEPHERD. He meant the wheels of clocks and watches perhaps. I thought his hands were whitish for his trade.

MAGISTRATE. Well, it appears to me that nothing can be gained by retaining this poor man in custody. Your business lies with the other unquestionably.

(Enter a peasant, a boy, etc.)

BOY. And he's gone far enough !

PEASANT. Yes—he's gone ! Nobody can find he tonight, now the moon is down ; and by tomorrow morning he'll be half across the Channel.

HANGMAN. 'Twas an unprincipled thing ! To cheat an honest man of his perquisites, and take away his trade. How am I to live ?

SHEPHERD'S WIFE. I'm unlawfully glad of it. He was a nice civil man and his punishment would have been too heavy for his sin. So brave and daring and cool as he was to sit here as he did ! I pray they'll never catch him. And I hope that you, sir, will never do your morning's work at Casterbridge, or meet our friend anywhere for business purposes.

SHEPHERD. Well, neighbours, I now do hope this little diversion is ended ; and I don't see why our christening party should be cut short by such a' onseemly interruption. Another jig, friends. We don't have a baby every day !

WOMEN. God forbid !

SHEPHERD. Come then, choose your partners ; form in line, and to it again till daylight.

HANGMAN. Wi' all my heart ! My day's work being lost, faith, I may as well make a night of it, too, and hope for better luck at the next assizes !

SHEPHERD. Now start the tune, fiddler !

(They form again for the six-hands-round. HANGMAN tries to get each woman severally as partner, all refuse. At last HANGMAN dances in the figure by himself, with an imaginary partner, and pulls out rope. JOSEPH SOMMERS looks on pensively.

CURTAIN

4. THE BOY COMES HOME

A. A. Milne

CHARACTERS

UNCLE JAMES

AUNT EMILY

PHILIP

MARY

MRS HIGGINS

SCENE. *A room in UNCLE JAMES's house in the Cromwell Road.*

TIME. *The day after the War.*

Any room in UNCLE JAMES's house is furnished in heavy mid-Victorian style ; this particular morning-room is perhaps stolider and more respectable even than the others, from the heavy table in the middle of it to the heavy engravings on the walls. There are two doors to it. The one at the back opens into the hall, the one at the side into the dining-room.

PHILIP comes in from the hall and goes into the dining-room. Apparently he finds nothing there, for he returns to the morning-room, looks about him for a moment and then rings the bell. It is ten o'clock, and he wants his breakfast. He picks up the paper, and sits in a heavy armchair in front of the fire—a pleasant-looking well-built person of twenty-three, with an air of decisiveness about him. MARY, the parlour-maid, comes in.

MARY. Did you ring, Master Philip ?

PHILIP. (absently) Yes ; I want some breakfast, please, Mary.

MARY. (*coldly*) Breakfast has been cleared away an hour ago.

PHILIP. (*absently*) Exactly. That's why I rang, you can boil me a couple of eggs or something. And coffee, not tea.

MARY. I'm sure I don't know what Mrs. Higgins will say ?

PHILIP. (*getting up*) Who is Mrs. Higgins ?

MARY. The cook. And she's not used to being put about like this.

PHILIP. Do you think she'll say something ?

MARY. I don't know what she'll say.

PHILIP. You needn't tell me, you know, if you don't want to. Anyway, I don't suppose it will shock me. One gets used to it in the Army. *(He smiles pleasantly at her).*

MARY. Well, I'll do what I can, sir. But breakfast at eight sharp in the master's rule, just as it used to be before you went away to the war.

PHILIP. Before I went away to the war I did a lot of silly things. Don't drag them up now. (*More curtly*) Two eggs, and if there's a ham bring that along too. *(He turns away).*

MARY. (*doubtfully, as she prepares to go*) Well, I'm sure I don't know what Mrs. Higgins will say.

(As she goes out she makes way for AUNT EMILY to come in, a kind-hearted mid-Victorian lady who has never had any desire for the vote.)

EMILY. There you are, Philip ! Good morning, dear. Did you sleep well ?

PHILIP. Rather ; splendidly, thanks, Aunt Emily. How are you ? *(He kisses her.)*

EMILY. And did you have a good breakfast ? Naughty boy to be late for it. I always thought they had to get up so early in the Army.

PHILIP. They do. That's why they're so late when they get out of the Army.

EMILY. Dear me ! I should have thought a habit of four years would have stayed with you.

PHILIP. Every morning for four years, as I've shot out of bed, I've said to myself, "Wait ! A time will come" (*Smiling*). That doesn't really give a habit a chance.

EMILY. Well, I daresay you wanted your sleep out. I was so afraid that a really cosy bed would keep you awake after all those years in the trenches.

PHILIP. Well, one isn't in the trenches all the time. And one gets leave—if one's an officer.

EMILY. (*reproachfully*) You didn't spend much of it with us Philip.

PHILIP. (*taking her hands*) I know; but you did understand, didn't you dear?

EMILY. We're not very gay, and I know you must have wanted gaiety for the little time you had. But I think your Uncle James felt it. After all, dear, you've lived with us for some years, and he is your guardian.

PHILIP. I know. You've been a darling to me always, Aunt Emily. But (*awkwardly*) Uncle James and I—

EMILY. Of course, he is a little difficult to get on with. I'm more used to him. But I'm sure he really is very fond of you, Philip.

PHILIP. H'm! I always used to be frightened of him... I suppose he's just the same. He seemed just the same last night—and he still has breakfast at eight o'clock. Been making pots of money, I suppose?

EMILY. He never tells me exactly, but he did speak once about the absurdity of the excess-profits tax. You see, jam is a thing the Army wants.

PHILIP. It certainly gets it.

EMILY. It was so nice for him, because it made him feel he was doing his bit, helping the poor men in the trenches.

Enter MARY

MARY. Mrs. Higgins wishes to speak to you, ma'am.

(*She looks at PHILIP as much as to say, "There you are!"*)

EMILY. (*getting up*) Yes, I'll come. (*To PHILIP*) I think I'd better just see what she wants, Philip.

PHILIP. (*firmly to MARY*) Tell Mrs. Higgins to come here. (MARY hesitates and looks at her mistress.) At once, please.

(*Exit MARY.*)

EMILY. (*upset*) Philip, dear, I don't know what Mrs. Higgins will say—

PHILIP. No ; nobody seems to. I thought we might really find out for once.

EMILY. (*going towards the door*) Perhaps I'd better go—

PHILIP. (*putting his arm round her waist*) Oh no, you mustn't. You see, she really wants to see me.

EMILY. You ?

PHILIP. Yes ; I ordered breakfast five minutes ago.

EMILY. Philip ! My poor boy ! Why didn't you tell me ? And I daresay I could have got it for you. Though I don't know what Mrs. Higgins—

(*An extremely angry voice is heard outside, and MRS. HIGGINS, stout and aggressive, comes in.*)

MRS. HIGGINS. (*truculently*) You sent for me, ma'am ?

EMILY. (*nervously*) Yes—er—I think if you —perhaps—

PHILIP. (*calmly*) I sent for you, Mrs. Higgins. I want some breakfast. Didn't Mary tell you ?

MRS. HIGGINS. Breakfast is at eight o'clock. It always has been as long as I've been in this house, and always will be until I get further orders.

PHILIP. Well, you've just got further orders. Two eggs, and if there's a ham—

MRS. HIGGINS. Orders. We're talking about orders. From whom in this house do I take orders, may I ask ?

PHILIP. In this case from me.

MRS. HIGGINS. (*playing her trumpet-card*) In that case, ma'am I wish to give a month's notice from to-day. *Inclusive.*

PHILIP. (*quickly, before his aunt can say anything*) Certainly. In fact, you'd probably prefer it if my aunt gave you notice, and then you could go at once. We can easily arrange that. (*To AUNT EMILY as he takes out a fountain-pen and cheque-book*). What do you pay her ?

EMILY. (*faintly*) Forty-five pounds.

PHILIP. (*writing on his knee*) Twelves into forty-five....

(Pleasantly to MRS. HIGGINS, but without looking up) I hope you don't mind a Cox's cheque. Some people do ; but this is quite a good one. (Tearing it out) Here you are.

MRS HIGGINS. (taken aback) What's this ?

PHILIP. Your wages instead of notice. Now you can go at once.

MRS. HIGGINS. Who said anything about going ?

PHILIP. (surprised) I'm sorry ; I thought you did.

MRS. HIGGINS. If it's only a bit of breakfast, I don't say but what I mightn't get it, if I'm asked decent.

PHILIP. (putting back the cheque) Then let me say again, "Two eggs, ham and coffee". And Mary can bring the ham up at once, and I'll get going on that. (Turning away) Thanks very much.

MRS. HIGGINS. Well, I—well—well ! (Exit speechless).

PHILIP. (surprised) Is that all she ever says ? It isn't much to worry about.

EMILY. Philip, how could you ! I should have been terrified.

PHILLIP. Well, you see, I've done your job for two years out there.

EMILY. What job ?

PHILIP. Mess President... I think I'll go and see about that ham.

(He smiles at her and goes out into the dining-room. AUNT EMILY wanders round the room, putting a few things tidy as is her habit, when she is interrupted by the entrance of UNCLE JAMES. JAMES is not a big man, nor an impressive one in his black morning-coat ; and his thin straggly beard, now going grey, does not hide a chin of any great power ; but he has a severity which passes for strength with the weak.)

JAMES. Philip down yet ?

EMILY. He's just having his breakfast.

JAMES. (looking at his watch) Ten o'clock. (Snapping it shut and putting it back) Ten o'clock. I say ten o'clock, Emily.

EMILY. Yes, dear, I heard you.

JAMES. You don't say anything ?

EMILY. (vaguely) I expect he's tired after that long war.

JAMES. That's no excuse for not being punctual. I suppose he learnt punctuality in the Army ?

EMILY. I expect he learnt it. James, but I understood him to say that he'd forgotten it.

JAMES. Then the sooner he learns it again the better. I particularly stayed away from the office to-day in order to talk things over with him, and (*looking at his watch*) here's ten o'clock—past ten—and no sign of him. I'm practically throwing away a day.

EMILY. What are you going to talk to him about ?

JAMES. His future, naturally. I have decided that the best thing he can do is to come into the business at once.

EMILY. Are you really going to talk it over with him James, or are you just going to tell him that he must come ?

JAMES. (*surprised*) What do you mean ? What's the difference ? Naturally we shall talk it over first, and—er—naturally he'll fall in with my wishes.

EMILY. I suppose he can hardly help himself, poor boy.

JAMES. Not until he's twenty-five, anyhow. When he's twenty-five he can have his own money and do what he likes with it.

EMILY. (*timidly*) But I think you ought to consult him a little, dear. After all, he has been fighting for us.

JAMES. (*with his back to the fire*) Now that's the sort of silly sentiment that there's been much too much of. I object to it strongly. I don't want to boast, but I think I may claim to have done my share. I gave up my nephew to my country, and I--er—suffered from the shortage of potatoes to an extent that you probably didn't realize. Indeed, if it hadn't been for your fortunate discovery about that time that you didn't really like potatoes, I don't know how we should have carried on. And, as I think I've told you before, the excess-profits tax seemed to me a singularly stupid piece of legislation—but I paid it. And I don't go boasting about how much I paid.

EMILY. (*unconvinced*) Well, I think that Philip's four years out there have made him more of a man ; he doesn't seem somehow like a boy who can be told what to do. I'm sure they've taught him something.

JAMES. I've no doubt that they've taught him something about—er—bombs and—er—which end a revolver goes off, and how to form fours. But I don't see that that sort of thing helps him to decide upon the most suitable career for a young man in after-war conditions.

EMILY. Well, I can only say you'll find him different.

JAMES. I didn't notice any particular difference last night.

EMILY. I think you'll find him rather more—I can't quite think of the word, but Mrs. Higgins could tell you what I mean.

JAMES. Of course, if he likes to earn his living any other way, he may ; but I don't see how he proposes to do it so long as I hold the purse-strings. (*Looking at his watch*) Perhaps you'd better tell him that I cannot wait any longer.

(EMILY opens the door leading into the dining-room and talks through it to PHILIP.)

EMILY. Philip, your uncle is waiting to see you before he goes to the office. Will you be long, dear ?

PHILIP. (*from the dining-room*) Is he in a hurry ?

JAMES. (*shortly*) Yes.

EMILY. He says he is rather, dear.

PHILIP. Couldn't he come and talk in here ? It wouldn't interfere with my breakfast.

JAMES. No.

EMILY. He says he'd rather you came to him, darling.

PHILIP. (*resigned*) Oh, well.

EMILY. (*to JAMES*) He'll be here directly, dear. Just sit down in front of the fire and make yourself comfortable with the paper. He won't keep you long. (*She arranges him.*)

JAMES. (*taking the paper*) The morning is not the time to make oneself comfortable. It's a most dangerous habit. It nearly found myself dropping off in front of the fire just now. I don't like this hanging about, wasting the day. (*He opens the paper.*)

EMILY. You should have had a nice sleep, dear, while you could. We were up so late last night listening to Philip's stories.

JAMES. Yes, yes. (*He begins a yawn and stifles it hurriedly.*)

You mustn't neglect your duties, Emily. I've no doubt you have plenty to do.

EMILY. All right, James, then I'll leave you. But don't be hard on the boy.

JAMES. (*sleepily*) I shall be just, Emily ; you can rely upon that.

EMILY. (*going to the door*) I don't think that's quite what I meant.
(*She goes out.*)

(JAMES, who is now quite comfortable, begins to nod. He wakes up with a start, turns over the paper, and nods again. Soon he is breathing deeply with closed eyes.)

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PHILIP. (*coming in*) Sorry to have kept you waiting, but I was a bit late for breakfast. (*He takes out his pipe.*) Are we going to talk business or what ?

JAMES. (*taking out his watch*) A bit late ! I make it just two hours.

PHILIP. (*pleasantly*) All right, Uncle James. Call it two hours late. Or twenty-two hours early for to-morrow's breakfast, if you like.

(He sits down in a chair on the opposite side of the table from his uncle, and lights his pipe.)

JAMES. You smoke now ?

PHILIP. (*staggered*) I what ?

JAMES. (*nodding at his pipe*) You smoke ?

PHILIP. Good heavens ! what do you think we did in France ?

JAMES. Before you start smoking all over the house, I should have thought you would have asked your aunt's permission.

(PHILIP looks at him in amazement, and then goes to the door.)

PHILIP. (*calling*) Aunt Emily ! ...Aunt Emily ! ...Do you mind my smoking in here !

AUNT EMILY. (*from upstairs*) Of course, not darling.

PHILIP. (*to JAMES, as he returns to his chair*) Of course not, darling.
(He puts back his pipe in his mouth.)

JAMES. Now, understand once and for all, Philip, while you remain in my house I expect not only punctuality, but also civility and respect. I will not have impertinence.

PHILIP. (*unimpressed*) Well, that's what I want to talk to you about, Uncle James. About staying in your house, I mean.

JAMES. I don't know what you do mean.

PHILIP. Well, we don't get on too well together, and I thought perhaps I'd better take rooms somewhere. You could give me an allowance until I came into my money. Or I suppose you could give me the money now if you really liked. I don't quite know how father left it to me.

JAMES. (*coldly*) You come into your money when you are twenty-five. Your father very wisely felt that to trust a large sum to a mere boy of twenty-one was simply putting temptation in his way. Whether I have the power or not to alter his dispositions, I certainly don't propose to do so.

PHILIP. If it comes to that, I *am* twenty-five.

JAMES. Indeed? I had an impression that that event took place in about two years' time. When did you become twenty-five, may I ask?

PHILIP. (*quietly*) It was on the Somme. We were attacking the next day and my company was in support. We were in a so-called trench on the edge of a wood—a damned rotten place to be, and we got hell. The company commander sent back to ask if we could move. The C.O. said, "Certainly not; hang on". We hung on; doing nothing, you know—just hanging on and waiting for the next day. Of course, the Boche knew all about that. He had it on us nicely... (*Sadly*) Poor old Billy! he was one of the best—our company commander, you know. They got him, poor devil! That left *me* in command of the company. I sent a runner back to ask if I could move. Well, I'd had a bit of a scout on my own and found a sort of trench five hundred yards to the right. Not what *you'd* call a trench, of course, but compared to that wood—well, it was absolutely Hyde Park. I described the position and asked if I could go there. My man never came back. I waited an hour and sent another man. He went west too. Well, I wasn't going to send a third. It was murder. So I had to decide. We'd lost about half the company by this time, you see. Well, there were three things I could do—hang on, move to this other trench, against orders, or go back myself and explain the situation;... I moved... And then I went back to the C.O. and told him I'd moved... And then I went back to the company again...

(Quietly) That was when I became twenty-five... or thirty-five... or forty-five.

JAMES. (*recovering himself with an effort*) Ah yes, yes (*He coughs awkwardly*). No doubt points like that frequently crop up in the trenches. I am glad that you did well out there, and I'm sure your Colonel would speak kindly of you ; but when it comes to choosing a career for you now that you have left the Army, my advice is not altogether to be despised. Your father evidently thought so, or he would not have entrusted you to my care.

PHILIP. My father didn't foresee this war.

JAMES. Yes, yes, but you make too much of this war. All you young boys seem to think you've come back from France to teach us our business. You'll find that it is you who'll have to learn, not we.

PHILIP. I'm quite prepared to learn, in fact I want to.

JAMES. Excellent. Then we can consider that settled.

PHILIP. Well, we haven't settled yet what business I'm going to learn.

JAMES. I don't think that's very difficult. I propose to take you into my business. You'll start at the bottom, of course, but it will be a splendid opening for you.

PHILIP. (*thoughtfully*) I see. So you've decided it for me ? The jam business.

JAMES. (*sharply*) Is there anything to be ashamed of in that ?

PHILIP. Oh no, nothing at all. Only it doesn't happen to appeal to me.

JAMES. If you knew which side your bread was buttered, it would appeal to you very considerably.

PHILIP. I'm afraid I can't see the butter for the jam.

JAMES. I don't want any silly jokes of that sort. You were glad enough to get it out there, I've no doubt.

PHILIP. Oh yes, Perhaps that's why I'm so sick of it now... No, it's no good, Uncle James ; you must think of something else.

JAMES. (*with a sneer*) Perhaps you've thought of something else ?

PHILIP. Well, I had some idea of being an architect—

JAMES. You propose to start learning to be an architect at twenty-three ?

PHILIP. (*smiling*) Well, I couldn't start before, could I ?

JAMES. Exactly. And now you'll find it's too late.

PHILIP. Is it ? Aren't there going to be any more architects, or doctors, or solicitors, or barristers ? Because we've all lost four years of our lives, are all the profession going to die out ?

JAMES. And how old do you suppose you'll be before you're earning money as an architect ?

PHILIP. The usual time, whatever that may be. If I'm four years behind, so is everybody else.

JAMES. Well. I think it's high time you began to earn a living at once.

PHILIP. Look here, Uncle James, do you really think that you can treat me like a boy who's just left school ? Do you think four years at the front have made no difference at all ?

JAMES. If there had been any difference, I should have expected it to take the form of an increased readiness to obey orders and recognize authority.

PHILIP. (*regretfully*) You are evidently determined to have a row. Perhaps I had better tell you once and for all that I refuse to go into the turnip and vegetable marrow business.

JAMES. (*thumping the table angrily*) And perhaps I'd better tell you, sir, once and for all, that I don't propose to allow rudeness from an impertinent young puppy.

PHILLIP. (*reminiscently*) I remember annoying our Brigadier once. He was covered with red, had a very red face, about twenty medals, and a cold blue eye. He told me how angry he was for about five minutes while I stood to attention. I'm afraid you aren't nearly so impressive, Uncle James.

JAMES. (*rather upset*) Oh ! (*Recovering himself*) Fortunately I have other means of impressing you. The power of the purse goes a long way in this world. I propose to use it.

PHILIP. I see... Yes... that's rather awkward, isn't it ?

JAMES. (*pleasantly*) I think you'll find it very awkward.

PHILIP. (*thoughtfully*) Yes.

(With an amused laugh JAMES settles down to his paper as if the interview were over.)

PHILIP. *(to himself)* I suppose I shall have to think of another argument.

(He takes out a revolver from his pocket and fondles it affectionately.)

JAMES. *(Looking up suddenly as he is doing this—amazed)* What on earth are you doing ?

PHILIP. Souvenir from France. Do you know, Uncle James, that this revolver has killed about twenty Germans ?

JAMES. *(shortly)* Oh ! Well, don't go playing about with it here, or you'll be killing Englishmen before you know where you are.

PHILIP. Well, you never know. *(He raises it leisurely and points it at his uncle.)* It's a nice little weapon.

JAMES. *(angrily)* Put it down, sir. You ought to have grown out of monkey tricks like that in the Army. You ought to know better than to point an unloaded revolver at anybody. That's the way accidents always happen.

PHILIP. Not when you've been on a revolver course and know all about it. Besides, it is loaded.

JAMES. *(very angry because he is frightened suddenly)* Put it down at once, sir. *(PHILIP turns it away from him and examines it carelessly).* What's the matter with you ? Have you gone mad suddenly ?

PHILIP. *(mildly)* I thought you'd be interested in it. It's shot such a lot of Germans.

JAMES. Well, it won't want to shoot any more, and the sooner you get rid of it the better.

PHILIP. I wonder. Does it ever occur to you, Uncle James, that there are about a hundred thousand people in England who own revolvers, who are quite accustomed to them and—who have nobody to practise on now ?

JAMES. No, sir, it certainly doesn't.

PHILIP. *(thoughtfully)* I wonder if it will make any difference. You know, one gets so used to potting at people. It's rather difficult to realize suddenly that one oughtn't to.

JAMES. *(getting up)* I don't know what the object of all this

tomfoolery is, if it has one. But you understand that I expect you to come to the office with me to-morrow at nine o'clock. Kindly see you're punctual.

(He turns to go away.)

PHILIP. *(softly)* Uncle James.

JAMES. *(over his shoulder)* I have no more—

PHILIP. *(in his parade voice)* Damn it, sir ! stand to attention when you talk to an officer ! *(JAMES instinctively turns round and stiffens himself)*. That's better ; you can sit down if you like.

(He motions JAMES to his chair with the revolver.)

JAMES. *(going nervously to his chair)* What does this bluff mean ?

PHILIP. It isn't bluff, it's quite serious. *(Pointing the revolver at his uncle)*. Do sit down.

JAMES. *(sitting down)* Threats, eh ?

PHILIP. Persuasion.

JAMES. At the point of the revolver ? You settle your arguments by force ? Good heavens, sir ! this is just the very thing that we were fighting to put down.

PHILIP. We were fighting ! *We ! We !* Uncle, you're a humorist.

JAMES. Well, "you", if you prefer it. Although those of us who stayed at home—

PHILIP. Yes, never mind about the excess profits now. I can tell you quite well what we fought for. We used force to put down force. That's what I'm doing now. You were going to use force—the force of money—to make me do what you wanted. Now I'm using force to stop it.

(He levels the revolver again.)

JAMES. You're—you're going to shoot your old uncle ?

PHILIP. Why not ? I've shot lots of old uncles—Landsturmers

JAMES. But those were Germans ! It's different shooting Germans. You're in England now. You couldn't have a crime on your conscience like that.

PHILIP. Ah, but you mustn't think that after four years of war one has quite the same ideas about the sanctity of human life. How could one ?

JAMES. You'll find that juries have kept pretty much the same ideas, I fancy.

PHILIP. Yes, but revolvers often go off accidentally. You said so yourself. This is going to be purest accident. Can't you see it in the papers ? "The deceased's nephew, who was obviously upset—"

JAMES. I suppose you think it's brave to come back from the front and threaten a defenceless man with a revolver ? Is that the sort of fair play they teach you in the Army ?

PHILIP. Good heavens ! Of course it is. You don't think that you wait until the other side has got just as many guns as you before you attack ? You're really rather lucky. Strictly speaking, I ought to have thrown half a dozen bombs at you first. (*Taking one out of his pocket*). As it happens, I've only got one.

JAMES. (*thoroughly alarmed*) Put that back at once.

PHILIP. (*putting down the revolver and taking it in his hands*) You hold in the right hand—so—taking care to keep the lever down. Then you take the pin in the finger—so, and—but perhaps this doesn't interest you ?

JAMES. (*edging his chair away*) Put it down at once, sir, Good heavens ! anything might happen.

PHILIP. (*putting it down and taking up the revolver again*) Does it ever occur to you, Uncle James, that there are about three million people in England who know all about bombs, and how to throw them, and—

JAMES. It certainly does not occur to me. I should never dream of letting these things occur to me.

PHILIP. (*looking at the bomb regretfully*) It's rather against my principles as a soldier, but just to make things a bit more fair—(*generously*) you shall have it. (*He holds it out to him suddenly.*)

JAMES. (*shrinking back again*) Certainly not, sir. It might go off at any moment.

PHILIP. (*putting it back in his pocket*) Oh no ; it's quite useless ; there's no detonator... .(*Sternly*) Now then, let's talk business.

JAMES. What do you want me to do ?

PHILIP. Strictly speaking, you should be holding your hands

over your head and saying "Kamerad!" However, I'll let you off that. All I ask from you is that you should be reasonable.

JAMES. And if I refuse, you'll shoot me?

PHILIP. Well, I don't quite know, Uncle James. I expect we should go through this little scene again to-morrow. You haven't enjoyed it, have you? Well, there's lots more of it to come. We'll rehearse it every day. One day, if you go on being unreasonable, the thing will go off. Of course, you think that I shouldn't have the pluck to fire. But you can't be quite certain. It's a hundred to one that I shan't—only I might. Fear—it's a horrible thing. Elderly men die of it sometimes.

JAMES. Pooh! I'm not to be bluffed like that.

PHILIP. (suddenly) You're quite right; you're not that sort. I made a mistake. (Aiming carefully) I shall have to do it straight off, after all. One—two—

JAMES. (on his knees, with uplifted hands, in an agony of terror) Philip! Mercy! What are your terms?

PHILIP. (picking him up by the scruff, and helping him into the chair) Good man, that's the way to talk. I'll get them for you. Make yourself comfortable in front of the fire till I come back. Here's the paper.

(He gives his uncle the paper, and goes out into the hall.)

* * * *

(James opens his eyes with a start and looks round him in a bewildered way. He rubs his head, takes out his watch and looks at it, and then stares round the room again. The door from the dining-room opens, and Philip comes in with a piece of toast in his hand.

PHILIP. (his mouth full) You wanted to see me, Uncle James?

JAMES. (still bewildered) That's all right, my boy, that's all right. What have you been doing?

PHILIP. (surprised) Breakfast. (Putting the last piece in his mouth) Rather late, I am afraid.

JAMES. That's all right.

(He laughs awkwardly.)

PHILIP. Anything the matter? You don't look your usual bright self.

JAMES. I—er—seem to have dropped asleep in front of the fire. Most unusual thing for me to have done. Most unusual.

PHILIP. Let that be a lesson to you not to get up so early. Of course, if you're in the Army you can't help yourself. Thank heaven I'm out of it, and my own master again.

JAMES. Ah, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. Sit down, Philip. *(He indicates the chair by the fire.)*

PHILIP. *(taking a chair by the table)* You have that, uncle ; I shall be all right here.

JAMES. *(hastily)* No, no ; you come here. *(He gives PHILIP the armchair and sits by the table himself.)* I should be dropping off again. *(He laughs awkwardly.)*

PHILIP. Righto.

(He puts his hand in his pocket. UNCLE JAMES shivers and looks at him in horror. PHILIP brings out his pipe, and a sickly grin of relief comes into JAMES' face.)

JAMES. I suppose you smoked a lot in France ?

PHILIP. Rather ! Nothing else to do. It's allowed in here ?

JAMES. *(hastily)* Yes, yes, of course. *(PHILIP lights his pipe.)* Well now, Philip, what are you going to do, now you've left the Army ?

PHILIP. *(promptly)* Burn my uniform and sell my revolver.

JAMES. *(starting at the word "revolver")* Sell your revolver, eh ?

PHILIP. *(surprised)* Well, I don't want it now, do I ?

JAMES. No... Oh no... Oh, most certainly not, I should say. Oh, I can't see why you should want it at all. *(With an uneasy laugh)* You're in England now. No need for revolvers here—eh ?

PHILIP. *(starting at him)* Well, no, I hope not.

JAMES. *(hastily)* Quite so. Well now, Philip, what next ? We must find a profession for you.

PHILIP. *(yawning)* I suppose so I haven't really thought about it much.

JAMES. You never wanted to be an architect ?

PHILIP. *(surprised)* Architect ?

(JAMES rubs his head and wonders what made him think of architect.)

JAMES. Or anything like that.

PHILIP. It's a bit late, isn't it ?

JAMES. Well, if you're four years behind, so is everybody else.
(*He feels vaguely that he has heard this argument before*).

PHILIP. (*smiling*) To tell the truth, I don't feel I mind much anyway. Anything you like—except a commissionaire. I absolutely refuse to wear uniform again.

JAMES. How would you like to come into the business ?

PHILIP. The jam business ? Well, I don't know. You wouldn't want me to salute you in the mornings ?

JAMES. My dear boy, no !

PHILIP. All right, I'll try it if you like. I don't know if I shall be any good—what do you do ?

JAMES. It's your experience in managing and—er—handling men which I hope will be of value.

PHILIP. Oh, I can do that all right. (*Stretching himself luxuriously*) Uncle James, do you realize that I'm never going to salute again, or wear a uniform, or get wet—really wet, I mean—or examine men's feet, or stand to attention when I'm spoken to, or—Oh, lots more things ? And best of all, I'm never going to be frightened again. Have you ever known what it is to be afraid—really afraid ?

JAMES. (*embarrassed*) I—er—well— (*He coughs.*)

PHILIP. No, you couldn't—not really afraid of death, I mean. Well, that's over now. Good lord ! I could spend the rest of my life in the British Museum and be happy...

JAMES. (*getting up*) All right, we'll try you in the office. I expect you want a holiday first, though.

PHILIP. (*getting up*) My dear uncle, this is holiday. Being in London is holiday. Buying an evening paper—wearing a waistcoat again—running after a bus—anything—it's all holiday.

JAMES. All right, then, come along with me now, and I'll introduce you to Mr. Bamford.

PHILIP. Right. Who's he ?

JAMES. Our manager. A little stiff, but a very good fellow. He'll be delighted to hear that you are coming into the firm.

PHILIP. (*smiling*) Perhaps I'd better bring my revolver, in case he isn't.

JAMES. (*laughing with forced heartiness as they go together to the door*) Ha, ha ! A good joke that ! Ha, ha, ha ! A good joke—but only a joke, of course. Ha, ha ! He, he, he !

(PHILIP goes out. JAMES, following him, turns at the door, and looks round the room in a bewildered way. Was it a dream, or wasn't it ? He will never be quite certain.)

CURTAIN

5. JULIUS CÆSAR
ACT III SCENE 2
William Shakespeare

CHARACTERS

ANTONY
BRUTUS
CASSIUS
FIRST CITIZEN
SECOND CITIZEN
THIRD CITIZEN
FOURTH CITIZEN
SERVANT

Rome. The Forum.

Enter BRUTUS and CASSIUS, and a throng of Citizens.

CITIZENS : We will be satisfied ! Let us be satisfied
BRU. Then follow me, and give me audience, friends
Cassius, go you into the other street,
And part the numbers.
Those that will hear me speak, let 'em stay here ;
Those that will follow Cassius, go with him ;
And public reasons shall be rendered
Of Cæsar's death.

FIRST CIT. I will hear Brutus speak.

SEC. CIT. I will hear Cassius ; and compare their reasons.
When severally we hear them rendered.

*(Exit CASSIUS, with some of the Citizens ; BRUTUS goes into the
pulpit.)*

THIRD CIT. The noble Brutus is ascended ! Silence !

BRU. Be patient till the last.

Romans, countrymen, and lovers ! hear me for my cause ; and

be silent, that you may hear : believe me for mine honour, and have respect to mine honour, that you may believe : censure me in your wisdom, and awake your senses, that you may the better judge. If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of Cæsar's, to him I say, that Brutus' love to Cæsar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Cæsar, this is my answer : Not that I loved Cæsar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Cæsar were living, and die all slaves, than that Cæsar were dead, to live all free men ? As Cæsar loved me, I weep for him ; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it ; as he was valiant, I honour him ; but, as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love ; joy for his fortune ; honour for his valour ; and death for his ambition. Who is here so base that would be a bondman ? If any, speak ; for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman ? If any, speak ; for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country ? If any, speak ; for him have I offended. I pause for a reply.

CITIZENS. None, Brutus, none.

BRU. Then none have I offended. I have done no more to Cæsar, than you shall do to Brutus. The question of his death is enroll'd in the Capitol ; his glory not extenuated, wherein he was worthy, nor his offences enforced, for which he suffered death.

Enter ANTONY and Others, with CÆSAR's body.

Here comes his body, mourned by Mark Antony : who, though he had no hand in his death, shall receive the benefit of his dying, a place in the commonwealth ; as which of you shall not ? With this I depart : that, as I slew my best lover for the good of Rome, I have the same dagger for myself, when it shall please my country to need my death.

CITIZENS. Live, Brutus ! live, live !

FIRST CIT. Bring him with triumph home unto his house.

SEC. CIT. Give him a status with his ancestors.

THIRD CIT. Let him be Cæsar.

FOURTH CIT. Cæsar's better parts

Shall be crown'd in Brutus.

FIRST CIT. We'll bring him to his house with shouts and clamours.

BRU. My countrymen,—

SEC. CIT. Peace ! Silence ! Brutus speaks.

FIRST CIT. Peace, ho !

BRU. Good countrymen, let me depart alone.
And, for my sake, stay here with Antony.
Do grace to Cæsar's corpse, and grace his speech
Tending to Cæsar's glories, which Mark Antony,
By our permission, is allow'd to make.
I do entreat you, not a man depart,
Save I alone, till Antony have spoke.

(*Exit.*)

FIRST CIT. Stay, ho ! and let us hear Mark Antony.

THIRD CIT. Let him go up into the public chair ;
We'll hear him. Noble Antony, go up.

ANT. For Brutus' sake, I am beholding to you.

(*Goes up.*)

FOURTH CIT. What does he say of Brutus ?

THIRD CIT. He says, for Brutus' sake,
He finds himself beholding to us all.

FOURTH CIT. 'Twere best he speak no harm of Brutus here.

FIRST CIT. This Cæsar was a tyrant.

THIRD CIT. Nay, that's certain.

We are bless'd that Rome is rid of him.

SEC. CIT. Peace ! let us hear what Antony can say.

ANT. You gentle Romans,—

CITIZENS. Peace, ho ! let us hear him.

ANT. Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears :
I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them ;
The good is oft interred with their bones ;
So let it be with Cæsar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Cæsar was ambitious ;
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Cæsar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest,—
For Brutus is an honourable man :
So are they all, all honourable men,—
Come I to speak in Cæsar's funeral.

He was my friend, faithful and just to me :
But Brutus says he was ambitious ;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill :
Did this in Cæsar seem ambitious ?
When that the poor have cried, Cæsar hath wept ;
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff :
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious ;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse ; was this ambition ?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious ;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause :
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him ?
O judgment ! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason ! Bear with me ;
My heart is in the coffin there with Cæsar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.

FIRST CIT. Methinks there is much reason in his sayings.

SEC. CIT. If thou consider rightly of the matter,
Cæsar has had great wrong.

THIRD CIT. Has he, masters !
I fear there will a worse come in his place.

FOURTH CIT. Mark'd ye his words ? He would not take the crown ;
Therefore 'tis certain he was not ambitious.

FIRST CIT. If it be found so, some will dear abide it.

SEC. CIT. Poor soul ! his eyes are red as fire with weeping.

THIRD CIT. There's not a nobler man in Rome than Antony.

FOURTH CIT. Now mark him ; he begins again to speak.

ANT. But yesterday the word of Cæsar might
Have stood against the world ; now lies he there,
And none so poor to do him reverence.

O masters ! if I were dispos'd to stir
 Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,
 I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong,
 Who, you all know, are honourable men.
 I will not do them wrong ; I rather choose
 To wrong the dead, to wrong myself, and you,
 Than I will wrong such honourable men.
 But here's a parchment with the seal of Cæsar ;
 I found it in his closet,—'tis his will.—
 Let but the commons hear this testament—
 Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read—
 And they would go and kiss dead Cæsar's wounds
 And dip their napkins in his sacred blood ;
 Yea, beg a hair of him for memory,
 And, dying, mention it within their wills,
 Bequeathing it as a rich legacy
 Unto their issue.

FOURTH CIT. We'll hear the will. Read it, Mark Antony.

CITIZENS. The will, the will ! We will hear Cæsar's will.

ANT. Have patience, gentle friends ; I must not read it :
 It is not meet you know how Cæsar lov'd you.
 You are not wood, you are not stones, but men ;
 And, being men, hearing the will of Cæsar,
 It will inflame you, it will make you mad.
 'Tis good you know not that you are his heirs ;
 For if you should, O, what would come of it.

FOURTH CIT. Read the will ! we'll hear it, Antony ;
 You shall read us the will, Cæsar's will.

ANT. Will you be patient ? Will you stay awhile ?
 I have o'ershot myself to tell you of it.
 I fear I wrong the honourable men
 Whose daggers have stabb'd Cæsar ; I do fear it.

FOURTH CIT. They were traitors. Honourable men !

CITIZENS. The will ! the testament !

SEC. CIT. They were villains, murderers.

The will ! Read the will.

ANT. You will compel me then to read the will ?
Then make a ring about the corpse of Cæsar,
And let me show you him that made the will.
Shall I descend ? and will you give me leave ?

CITIZENS. Come down.

SEC. CIT. Descend.

(ANTONY comes down.)

Third CIT. You shall have leave.

FOURTH CIT. A ring ! Stand round.

FIRST CIT. Stand from the hearse ; stand from the body.

SEC. CIT. Room for Antony ; most noble Antony.

ANT. Nay, press not so upon me ; stand far off.

CITIZENS. Stand back ! Room ! Bear back !

ANT. If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.

You all do know this mantle : I remember
The first time ever Cæsar put it on ;
'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii.
Look ! in this place ran Cassius' dagger through :
See what a rent the envious Casca made :
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd :
And, as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Cæsar follow'd it,
As rushing out of doors, to be resolv'd
If Brutus so unkindly knock'd or no ;
For Brutus, as you know, was Cæsar's angel :
Judge, O you gods ! how dearly Cæsar lov'd him.
This was the most unkindest cut of all ;
For when the noble Cæsar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquish'd him : then burst his mighty heart :
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statua,
Which all the while ran blood, great Cæsar fell.
O ! What a fall was there, my countrymen ;
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,
Whilst bloody treason flourish'd over us.

O, now you weep, and I perceive you feel
 The dint of pity. These are gracious drops.
 Kind souls, what weep you when you but behold
 Our Cæsar's vesture wounded ? Look you here,
 Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors.

FIRST CIT. O piteous spectacle !

SEC. CIT. O noble Cæsar !

THIRD CIT. O woeful day !

FOURTH CIT. O traitors ! villains !

FIRST CIT. O most bloody sight !

SEC. CIT. We will be revenged.

CITIZENS. Revenge ! About ! Seek ! Burn ! Fire ! Kill !
 Stay ! Let not a traitor live !

ANT. Stay, countrymen !

FIRST CITIZEN. Peace there ! Hear the noble Antony.

SEC. CIT. We'll hear him, we'll follow him, we'll die with him.

ANT. Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up.
 To such a sudden flood of mutiny.

They that have done this deed are honourable :
 What private griefs they have, alas, I know not,
 That made them do it ; they are wise and honourable,
 And will, no doubt, with reason answer you.

I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts :

I am no orator, as Brutus is ;

But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man,

That love my friend ; and that they know full well

That gave me public leave to speak of him.

For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,

Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,

To stir men's blood : I only speak right on.

I tell you that which you yourselves do know,

Show you sweet Cæsar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,

And bid them speak for me ; but were I Brutus,

And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony

Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue

In every wound of Cæsar, that should move

The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny.

CITIZENS. We'll mutiny.

FIRST CIT. We'll burn the house of Brutus.

THIRD CIT. Away, then ! Come, seek the conspirators.

ANT. Yet hear me, countrymen ; yet hear me speak.

CITIZENS. Peace, ho ! Hear Antony, most noble Antony.

ANT. Why, friends, you go to do you know not what.

Wherein hath Cæsar thus deserv'd your loves ?

Alas ! you know not : I must tell you then.

You have forgot the will I told you of.

CITIZENS. Most true. The will ! Let's stay and hear the will.

ANT. Here is the will, and under Cæsar's seal.

To every Roman citizen he gives,

To every several man, seventy-five drachmas.

SEC. CIT. Most noble Cæsar ! We'll revange his death.

THIRD CIT. O royal Cæsar !

ANT. Hear me with patience.

CITIZENS. Peace, ho !

ANT. Moreover, he hath left you all his walks,

His private arbours, and new-planted orchards,

On this side Tiber ; he hath left them you.

And to your heirs for ever ; common pleasures,

To walk abroad, and recreate yourselves.

Here was a Cæsar ! When comes such another ?

FIRST CIT. Never, never ! Come, away, away !

We'll burn his body in the holy place,

And with the brands fire the traitors' houses.

Take up the body.

SEC. CIT. Go, fetch fire.

THIRD CIT. Pluck down benches.

FOURTH CIT. Pluck down forms, windows, any thing.

(Exeunt Citizens, with the body.)

ANT. Now let it work. Mischief, thou art afoot,
Take thou what course thou wilt !

Enter a Servant.

How now, fellow !

SERV. Sir, Octavius is already come to Rome.

ANT. Where is he ?

SERV. He and Lepidus are at Caesar's house.

ANT. And thither will I straight to visit him.
He comes upon a wish. Fortune is merry,
And in this mood will give us any thing.

SERV. I heard him say Brutus and Cassius
Are rid like madmen through the gates of Rome.

ANT. Belike they had some notice of the people.
How I had mov'd them. Bring me to Octavius.

(Exeunt.)

6. THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

ACT IV. SCENE 1.

William Shakespeare

CHARACTERS

DUKE
ANTONIO
BASSANIO
GRATIANO
SALARINO
SALANIO
SHYLOCK
NERISSA
PORTIA
CLERK

Venice A Court of Justice.

*Enter the DUKE : the Magnificoes ; ANTONIO, BASSANIO,
GRATIANO, SALARINO, SALANIO, and Others.*

DUKE. What, is Antonio here ?

ANT. Ready, so please your Grace.

DUKE. I am sorry for thee : thou art come to answer
A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch
Uncapable of pity, void and empty
From any dram of mercy.

ANT. I have heard
Your Grace hath ta'en great pains to qualify
His rigorous course : but since he stands obdurate,

And that no lawful means can carry me
 Out of his envy's reach, I do oppose
 My patience to his fury, and am arm'd
 To suffer with a quietness of spirit
 The very tyranny and rage of his.

DUKE. Go one, and call the Jew into the court.

SALAR. He's ready at the door : he comes, my lord.

Enter SHYLOCK

DUKE. Make room and let him stand before our face.
 Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too,
 That thou but lead'st this fashion of any malice
 To the last hour of act ; and then 'tis thought
 Thou'l show thy mercy and remorse more strange
 Than is thy strange-apparent cruelty ;
 And where thou now exact'st the penalty,—
 Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh,—
 Thou wilt not only lose the forfeiture,
 But, touch'd with human gentleness and love,
 Forgive a moiety of the principal ;
 Glancing an eye of pity on his losses,
 That have of late so huddled on his back,
 Enew to press a royal merchant down,
 And pluck commiseration of his state
 From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint,
 From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never train'd
 To offices of tender courtesy.
 We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.

SHY. I have possess'd your Grace of what I purpose ;
 And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn
 To have the due and forfeit of my bond :
 If you deny it, let the danger light
 Upon your charter and your city's freedom.
 You'll ask me, why I rather choose to have
 A weight of carrion flesh than to receive
 Three thousand ducats : I'll not answer that :
 But say it is my humour : is it answer'd ?
 What if my house be troubled with a rat,
 And I be pleas'd to give ten thousand ducats
 To have it ban'd ? What, are you answer'd yet ?

Some men there are love not a gaping pig ;
Some, that are mad if they behold a cat ;
..... for affection,
Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood
Of what it likes, or loathes. Now, for your answer :
As there is no firm reason to be render'd,
Why he cannot abide a gaping pig ;
Why he, a harmless necessary cat ;
..... ; but of force
Must yield to such inevitable shame
As to offend, himself being offended ;
So can I give no reason, nor I will not, .
More than a lodg'd hate and a certain loathing
I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
A losing suit against him. Are you answer'd ?

BASS. This is no answer, thou unfeeling man,
To excuse the current of thy cruelty.

SHY. I am not bound to please thee with my answer.

BASS. Do all men kill the things they do not love ?

SHY. Hates any man the thing he would not kill ?

BASS. Every offence is not a hate at first.

SHY. What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice ?

ANT. I pray you, think you question with the Jew ;
You may as well go stand upon the beach
And bid the main flood bate his usual height ;
You may as well use question with the wolf,
Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb ;
You may as well forbid the mountain pines
To wag their high tops, and to make no noise
When they are fretted with the gusts of heaven ;
You may as well do anything most hard
As seek to soften that—than which what's harder ?—
His Jewish heart. Therefore, I do beseech you,
Make no more offers, use no further means ;
But with all brief and plain conveniency,
Let me have judgment, and the Jew his will.

BASS. For thy three thousand ducats here is six.

SHY. If every ducat in six thousand ducats
Were in six parts, and every part a ducat,
I would not draw them ; I would have my bond.

DUKE. How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none ?

SHY. What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong ?
You have among you many a purchas'd slave,
Which, like your asses and your dogs and mules,
You use in abject and in slavish parts,
Because you bought them : shall I say to you,
Let them be free, marry them to your heirs ?
Why sweat they under burdens ? let their beds
Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates
Be season'd with such viands ? You will answer :
'The slaves are ours'. So do I answer you :
The pound of flesh which I demand of him,
Is dearly bought : 'tis mine and I will have it.
If you deny me, fie upon your law !
There is no force in the decrees of Venice.
I stand for judgment : answer ; shall I have it ?

DUKE. Upon my power I may dismiss this court,
Unless Bellario, a learned doctor,
Whom I have sent for to determine this,
Come here to-day.

SALAR. My lord, here stays without
A messenger with letters from the doctor,
New come from Padua.

DUKE. Bring us the letters : call the messenger.

BASS. Good cheer, Antonio ! What, man, courage yet !
The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones, and all,
Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of blood.

ANT. I am a tainted wether of the flock.
Meetest for death : the weakest kind of fruit
Drops earliest to the ground ; and so let me :
You cannot better be employ'd, Bassanio,
Than to live still, and write mine epitaph.

Enter NERISSA, dressed like a lawyer's clerk.

DUKE. Came you from Padua, from Bellario ?

NER. From both, my lord. Bellario greets your Grace.

(Presents a letter.)

BASS. Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly ?

SHY. To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there.

GRA. Not on thy sole, but on thy soul, harsh Jew,
Thou mak'st thy knife keen : but no metal can,
No, not the hangman's axe, bear half the keenness
Of thy sharp envy. Can no prayers pierce thee ?

SHY. No, none that thou hast wit enough to make.

GRA. O, be thou damn'd inexecrable dog !

And for thy life let justice be accus'd.

Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith,
To hold opinion with Pythagoras,
That souls of animals infuse themselves
Into the trunks of men. Thy currish spirit
Govern'd a wolf who, hang'd for human slaughter,
Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,
And whilst thou layest in thy unhallow'd dam,
Infus'd itself in thee ; for thy desires
Are wolfish, bloody, starv'd, and ravenous.

SHY. Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond,
Thou but offend'st thy lungs to speak so loud :
Repair thy wit, good youth, or it will fall
To cureless ruin. I stand here for law.

DUKE. This letter from Bellario doth commend
A young and learned doctor to our court.
Where is he ?

NER. He attendeth here hard by,
To know your answer, whether you'll admit him.

DUKE. With all my heart : some three or four of you
Go give him courteous conduct to this place.
Meantime, the court shall hear Bellario's letter.

CLERK. *(Reads)* 'Your Grace shall understand that at the receipt
of your letter I am very sick ; but in the instant that your messenger
came, in loving visitation was with me a young doctor of Rome—his
name is Balthazar. I acquainted him with the cause in controversy

between the Jew and Antonio the merchant : we turned o'er many books together : he is furnished with my opinion ; which, bettered with his own learning,—the greatness whereof I cannot enough commend,—comes with him, at my importunity, to fill up your Grace's request in my stead. I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation, for I never knew so young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your gracious acceptance, whose trial shall better publish his commendation.'

DUKE. You hear the learn'd Bellario, what he writes :
And here, I take it, is the doctor come.

Enter PORTIA, dressed like a Doctor of Laws.
Give me your hand. Came you from old Bellario ?

POR. I did, my lord.

DUKE. You are welcome : take your place.
Are you acquainted with the difference
That holds this present question in the court ?

POR. I am informed throughly of the cause.
Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew ?

DUKE. Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.

POR. Is your name Shylock ?

SHY. Shylock is my name,

POR. Of a strange nature is the suit you follow ;
Yet in such rule that the Venetian law
Cannot impugn you as you do proceed.

(To ANTONIO.) You stand within his danger, do you not ?

ANT. Ay, so he says.

POR. Do you confess the bond ?

ANT. I do.

POR. Then must the Jew be merciful.

SHY. On what compulsion must I ? Tell me that.

POR. The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice bless'd ;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes :
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest ; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown ;

His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings ;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings
It is an attribute to God himself,
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation : we do pray for mercy,
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much
To mitigate the justice of thy plea,
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.

SHY. My deeds upon my head ! I crave the law,
The penalty and forfeit of my bond.

POR. Is he not able to discharge the money ?

BASS. Yes, here I render it for him in the court :
Yea, twice the sum : if that will not suffice,
I will be bound to pay it ten times o'er,
On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart.
If this will not suffice, it must appear
That malice bears down truth. And, I beseech you,
Wrest once the law to your authority :
To do a great right do a little wrong,
And curb this cruel devil of his will.

POR. It must not be. There is no power in Venice
Can alter a decree established :
'Twill be recorded for a precedent,
And many an error by the same example
Will rush into the state. It cannot be.

SHY. A Daniel come to judgment ! Yea, a Daniel
O wise young judge, how I do honour thee !

POR. I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

SHY. Here 'tis, most reverend doctor ; here it is.

POR. Shylock, there's thrice thy money offer'd thee.

SHY. An oath, an oath ! I have an oath in heaven.
Shall I lay perjury upon my soul ?
No, not for Venice.

POR. Why, this bond is forfeit ;
And lawfully by this the Jew may claim
A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off
Nearest the merchant's heart. Be merciful :
Take thrice thy money ; bid me tear the bond.

SHY. When it is paid according to the tenour.
It doth appear you are a worthy judge ;
You know the law ; your exposition
Hath been most sound ; I charge you by the law,
Whereof you are a well-deserving pillar,
Proceed to judgement. By my soul I swear
There is no power in the tongue of man
To alter me. I stay here on my bond.

ANT. Most heartily I do beseech the court
To give the judgement.

POR. Why then, thus it is :
You must prepare your bosom for his knife.

SHY. O noble judge ! O excellent young man !

POR. For the intent and purpose of the law
Hath full relation to the penalty,
Which here appeareth due upon the bond.

SHY. 'Tis very true ! O wise and upright judge !
How much more elder art thou than thy looks !

POR. Therefore, lay bare your bosom.

SHY. Ay, his breast ;
So says the bond ; doth it not, noble judge ?--
'Nearest his heart', those are the very words.

POR. It is so. Are there balance here to weigh
The flesh ?

SHY. I have them ready.

POR. Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge,
To stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death.

SHY. Is it so nominated in the bond ?

POR. It is not so express'd, but what of that ?
'Twere good you do so much for charity.

SHY. I cannot find it ; 'tis not in the bond,

POR. You, merchant, have you anything to say ?

ANT. But little : I am arm'd and well prepar'd.
Give me your hand, Bassanio ; fare you well !
Grieve not that I am fall'n to this for you,
For herein Fortune shows herself more kind
Than is her custom. It is still her use
To let the wretched man outlive his wealth,
To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow
An age of poverty ; from which ling'ring penance
Of such a misery doth she cut me off.
Commend me to your honourable wife ;
Tell her the process of Antonio's end ;
Say how I lov'd you ; speak me fair in death ;
And, when the tale is told, bid her be judge
Whether Bassanio had not once a love.
Repent not you that you shall lose your friend,
And he repents not that he pays your debt ;
For if the Jew do cut but deep enough,
I'll pay it instantly with all my heart.

BASS. Antonio, I am married to a wife
Which is as dear to me as life itself ;
But life itself, my wife, and all the world,
Are not with me esteem'd above thy life ;
I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all
Here to this devil, to deliver you.

POR. Your wife would give you little thanks for that,
If she were by to hear you make the offer.

GRA. I have a wife, whom, I protest I love ;
I would she were in heaven, so she could
Entreat some power to change this currish Jew.

NER. 'Tis well you offer it behind her back ;
The wish would make else an unquiet house.

SHY. (Aside) These be the Christian husbands ! I have a daughter—
Would any of the stock of Barabbas

Had been her husband, rather than a Christian !—
We triflē time ; I pray thee pursue sentence.

POR. A pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine.
The court awards it and the law doth give it.

SHY. Most rightful judge !

POR. And you must cut this flesh from off his breast.
The law allows it, and the court awards it.

SHY. Most learned judge ! A sentence ! Come, prepare !

POR. Tarry a little ; There is something else.
This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood :
The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh'.
Then take thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh :
But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods
Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate
Unto the state of Venice.

GRA. O upright judge ! Mark, Jew. O learned judge !

SHY. Is that the law ?

POR. Thyself shalt see the act ;
For, as thou urgēst justice, be assur'd
Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desir'st.

GRA. O Learned judge ! Mark, Jew. A learned judge !

SHY. I take this offer then : Pay the bond thrice,
And let the Christian go.

BASS. Here is the money.

POR. Soft !

The Jew shall have all justice. Soft ! No haste.
He shall have nothing but the penalty.

GRA. O Jew ! an upright judge, a learned judge !

POR. Therefore, prepare thee to cut off the flesh.

Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more,
But just a pound of flesh ; if thou tak'st more
Or less than a just pound—be it but so much
As makes it light or heavy in the substance,
Or the division of the twentieth part
Of one poor scruple ; nay, if the scale do turn

But in the estimation of a hair—
Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate.

GRA. A second Daniel, A Daniel, Jew !
Now, infidel, I have thee on the hip.

POR. Why doth the Jew pause ? Take thy forfeiture.

SHY. Give me my principal, and let me go.

BASS. I have it ready for thee ; here it is.

POR. He hath refus'd it in the open court ;
He shall have merely justice and his bond,

GRA. A Daniel, still say I, a second Daniel !
I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word.

SHY. Shall I not have barely my principal ?

POR. Thou shalt have nothing but the forfeiture
To be so taken at thy peril, Jew.

SHY. Why, then the devil give him good of it !
I'll stay no longer question.

POR. Tarry, Jew.

The law hath yet another hold on you.
It is enacted in the laws of Venice,
If it be prov'd against an alien
That by direct or indirect attempts
He seek the life of any citizen,
The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive
Shall seize one half his goods ; the other half
Comes to the privy coffer of the state ;
And the offender's life lies in the mercy
Of the Duke only, 'gainst all other voice.
In which predicament, I say, thou stand'st :
For it appears by manifest proceeding
That indirectly and directly too,
Thou hast contriv'd against the very life
Of the defendant ; and thou hast incur'd
The danger formerly by me rehears'd.
Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the Duke.

GRA. Beg that thou mayst have leave to hang thyself ;
And yet, thy wealth being forfeit to the state,

Thou hast not left the value of a cord ;
Therefore thou must be hang'd at the state's charge.

DUKE. That thou shalt see the difference of our spirit,
I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it.
For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's ;
The other half comes to the general state,
Which humbleness may drive unto a fine.

POR. Ay, for the state ; not for Antonio.

SHY. Nay, take my life and all ; pardon not that.
You take my house when you do take the prop
That doth sustain my house ; you take my life
When you do take the means whereby I live.

POR. What mercy can you render him, Antonio ?

GRA. A halter gratis ; nothing else, for God's sake !

ANT. So please my lord the Duke, and all the court
To quit the fine for one half of his goods ;
I am content, so he will let me have
The other half in use, to render it,
Upon his death unto the gentleman
That lately stole his daughter—
Two things provided more : that, for this favour,
He presently become a Christian ;
The other, that he do record a gift,
Here in the court, of all he dies possess'd,
Unto his son Lorenzo, and his daughter.

DUKE. He shall do this, or else I do recant
The pardon that I late pronounced here.

POR. Art thou contented, Jew ? What dost thou say ?

SHY. I am content.

POR. Clerk, draw a deed of gift.

SHY. I pray you, give me leave to go from hence ;
I am not well ; send the deed after me,
And I will sign it.

DUKE. Get thee gone, but do it.

GRA. In christ'ning thou shalt have two godfathers ;
Had I been judge, thou shouldst have had ten more,
To bring thee to the gallows, not the font.

(*Exit SHYLOCK.*

DUKE. Sir, I entreat you home with me to dinner.

POR. I humbly do desire your Grace of pardon ;
I must away this night toward Padua,
And it is meet I presently set forth,

DUKE. I am sorry that your leisure serves you not,
Antonio, gratify this gentleman,
For in my mind you are much bound to him,

(*Exeunt DUKE, Magnificoes, and Train.*

BASS. Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend
Have by your wisdom been this day acquitted
Of grievous penalties ; in lieu whereof
Three thousand ducats, due unto the Jew,
We freely cope your courteous pains withal.

ANT. And stand indebted, over and above,
In love and service to you evermore.

POR. He is well paid that is well satisfied ;
And I, delivering you, am satisfied.
And therein do account myself well paid.
My mind was never yet more mercenary.
I pray you, know me when we meet again ;
I wish you well, and so I take my leave.

BASS. Dear sir, of force I must attempt you further ;
Take some remembrance of us, as a tribute,
Not as fee. Grant me two things, I pray you,
Not to deny me, and to pardon me.

POR. You press me far, and therefore I will yield.

(To ANT.) Give me your gloves, I'll wear them for your sake.

(To BASS.) And, for your love, I'll take this ring from you.
Do not draw back your hand : I'll take no more,
And you in love shall not deny me this.

BASS. This ring, good sir—alas, it is a trifle ;
I will not shame myself to give you this.

POR. I will have nothing else but only this ;
And now methinks I have a mind to it.

BASS. There's more depends on this than on the value.
The dearest ring in Venice will I give you,
And find it out by proclamation ;
Only for this, I pray you, pardon me.

POR. I see, sir, you are liberal in offers ;
You taught me first to beg, and now, methinks
You teach me how a beggar should be answer'd.

BASS. Good sir, this ring was given me by my wife ;
And, when she put it on, she made me vow
That I should neither sell, nor give, nor lose it.

POR. That 'scuse serves many men to save their gifts.
An if your wife be not a madwoman,
And know how well I have deserv'd this ring,
She would not hold out enemy for ever
For giving it to me. Well, peace be with you,

(Exeunt PORTIA and NERISSA.)

ANT. My Lord 'Bassanio, let him have the ring.
Let his deservings and my love withal,
Be valued 'gainst your wife's commandment.

BASS. Go, Gratiano ; run and overtake him ;
Give him the ring and bring him, if thou canst,
Unto Antonio's house. Away ! make haste,

(Exit GRATIANO.)

Come, you and I will thither presently ;
And in the morning early will we both
Fly toward Belmont. Come, Antonio. *(Exeunt.)*

7. REFUND

Percival Wilde*

CHARACTERS

THE PRINCIPAL

WASSERKOPF

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER

THE PHYSICS MASTER

THE HISTORY MASTER

THE GEOGRAPHY MASTER

THE SERVANT

Unit I

The Principal is seated at his flat-topped desk in his office in a high school. Enter a servant.

THE PRINCIPAL. Well, what is it ?

THE SERVANT. A man, sir, outside. He wants to see you.

THE PRINCIPAL. (*leaning back and stretching*) I receive parents only during office hours. The particular office hours are posted on the notice-board. Tell him that.

THE SERVANT. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. But it isn't a parent, sir.

THE PRINCIPAL. A pupil ?

THE SERVANT. I don't think so. He has a beard.

THE PRINCIPAL. (*disquieted*) Not a parent and not a pupil ? Then what is he ?

THE SERVANT. He told me I should just say 'Wasserkopf'.

*Adapted from Fritz Károly's Play.

THE PRINCIPAL. (*much disquieted*) What does he look like ? Stupid ? Intelligent ?

THE SERVANT. Fairly intelligent, I'd say, sir.

THE PRINCIPAL. (*reassured*) Good ! Then he's not a school inspector. Show him in.

THE SERVANT. Yes, sir.

(*He goes off. An instant later the door reopens to admit a bearded man, carelessly dressed, somewhat under forty. He is energetic and decided.*)

WASSERKOPF. How do you do ?

(*He remains standing.*)

THE PRINCIPAL. (*rising*) What can I do for you ?

WASSERKOPF. I'm Wasserkopf. (*He pauses*) Don't you remember me ?

THE PRINCIPAL. (*shaking his head*) No.

WASSERKOPF. It's possible I've changed. What the hell... ! Your class records will show I've got a right to come here.

THE PRINCIPAL. The class records ? How so ?

WASSERKOPF. Mr. Principal, if you please, I'm Wasserkopf.

THE PRINCIPAL. Doubtless, doubtless—but what has that to do with it ?

WASSERKOPF. You mean to say you don't even remember my name ? (*He thinks it over*). No, I imagine you wouldn't. You were probably glad to forget me. Well, Mr. Principal, I was a student in this school eighteen years ago.

THE PRINCIPAL. (*without enthusiasm*) Oh, were you ? Well, what do you want now ? A certificate ?

WASSERKOPF. (*doubtfully*) Since I'm bringing back the leaving certificate you gave me I suppose I can get along without another one, No, that isn't why I came here.

THE PRINCIPAL. Well ?

WASSERKOPF. (*clearing his throat, firmly*) As a former pupil of this school I want you to refund the tuition fees which were paid you for my education eighteen years ago.

THE PRINCIPAL. (*incredulously*) You want me to refund your tuition fees ?

WASSERKOPP. Exactly : the tuition fees. If I were a rich man I'd tell you to keep them, so far as I'm concerned. What the hell... ! But I'm not a rich man, and I need the money.

THE PRINCIPAL. I'm not sure I understand.

WASSERKOPP. Dammit, I want my tuition fees back ! Is that plain enough ?

THE PRINCIPAL. Why do you want it back ?

WASSERKOPP. Because I didn't get my money's worth, that's why ! This certificate here says I got an education. Well, I didn't. I didn't learn anything. I want my money back.

THE PRINCIPAL. But look here ! I don't understand it at all ! I've never heard of anything like it ! What an absurd idea !

WASSERKOPP. Absurd, is it ? It's a good idea. It's such a good idea that I didn't get it out of my own head, thanks to the education I got here, which made nothing but an incompetent ass out of me. My old classmate Leaderer gave me the idea not half an hour ago.

THE PRINCIPAL. Gave it to you ?

WASSERKOPP. (*nodding violently*) Like that. Here I was, walking along the street, fired from my last job, and wondering how I could get hold of some cash, because I was quite broke. I met Leaderer. I said, 'How goes it, Leaderer ?' 'Fine !' he says. 'I've got to hurry to the broker's to collect the money I made speculating in foreign exchange'. I said, 'What's foreign exchange ?' He says, 'I haven't got the time to tell you now, but according to the paper, Hungarian money is down seventy points, and I've made the difference. Do you understand ?' Well, I didn't understand. I said, 'How can you make money if money goes down ?' and he says, 'Wasserkopf, if you don't know that you don't know a damn thing, go to the school and get your tuition fees back.' Then he hurried away and left me standing there, and I said to myself, 'Why shouldn't I do that ?' He's right, now that I've thought it over. So I came here as fast as I could, and I'll be much obliged if you give me back my tuition fees, because they amount to a lot of money, and I didn't get anything for them.

THE PRINCIPAL. (*at a loss for words*) Really... But now... See here, we've never had a request like yours before. Leaderer told you—

WASSERKOPF. He's a good friend, Leaderer. He told me, and when I get my money back I'm going to buy him a present.

THE PRINCIPAL. You—you're not really serious, are you ?

WASSERKOPF. I was never more serious in my life. Treat me wrong here and I'll go straight to the Ministry of Education and complain about you ! You took my money, and you taught me nothing. Now I'm no good for anything, and I can't do the things I should have learned in school.

THE PRINCIPAL. You're mad ! (*He breaks off, to continue in a more conciliatory tone*). My dear sir, Herr-er—Wasserkopf, please go away quietly. I'll think the matter over after you've gone.

WASSERKOPF. (*sitting*) No, no ! You don't get rid of me so easy. I'll go when everything's been settled. I was given instruction here in exchange for money, so that I might be able to do something ; but I can't do anything because I was taught so badly, and anybody can see I ought to have my money back.

Unit 2

THE PRINCIPAL. (*trying to gain time*) What makes you think you can't do anything ?

WASSERKOPF. Everybody thinks so. If I get a job I can't keep it. Give me an examination and tell me what I ought to do. Call in the masters and let them say.

THE PRINCIPAL. What a distressing business ! How unfortunate ! You really want to take another examination ?

WASSERKOPF. Yes, I've the right to take one.

THE PRINCIPAL. What an unusual case ! (*He scratches his head*). I never heard of anything like it before. Er—I shall have to consult the staff. I shall have to call a conference....Er—will you wait in the waiting-room and give me a few minutes ?

WASSERKOPF. (*rising*) Yes ; but be quick. I've got no time to waste. (*He saunters out in leisurely fashion*.)

THE PRINCIPAL. (*rings ; the servant enters*) Ask the staff to come here at once. A most extraordinary conference !

THE SERVANT. Yes, sir.

(*He goes out*.)

THE PRINCIPAL. (*trying out his speech*) Gentlemen, I have asked you to come here on account of a most unusual state of affairs. It is unprecedented. In the thirty years that I have been a schoolmaster I have never heard of anything like it. Never, so long as I live, shall I expect to hear of anything like it again. Never! God forbid! (*The masters enter. They are characteristic figures whose eccentricities are exaggerated*). Gentlemen, I have asked you to come here on account of a most unusual state of affairs. Sit down, gentlemen. I shall open the conference. It is unprecedented, incredible, fantastic! A former pupil has just come to see me—er—an individual named Wasserkopf. He brought up a question which I have never encountered in my many years of experience. (*He explodes*). I never heard of anything like it!

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. Tell us about it.

THE PRINCIPAL. He wants—he wants his tuition fees back.

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. Why?

THE PRINCIPAL. Because he's lost his job. Because he's broke. Because he's an ass. I should be glad to have you express your views on this unparalleled case.

THE PHYSICS MASTER. Gentlemen, the case is natural. The law of the conservation of energy proves that any given pupil will lose, in any given period, as much knowledge as a teacher can drill into his head in another period of like duration.

THE HISTORY MASTER. There is nothing like it in the history of civilization. It is said the Bourbons learned nothing and forgot nothing. If that is true—

THE PHYSICS MASTER. The law of the conservation of energy—
(*The two argue*.)

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. The question is, does he want the amount with simple or compound interest, because in the latter event—

THE GEOGRAPHY MASTER. Where is the fellow, anyhow?

THE PRINCIPAL. He's waiting outside. He wants to be re-examined. He says he learned nothing. He says a re-examination will prove it. I'd like to know what you gentlemen think about it.

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. (*chuckling*) A re-examination? Gentlemen, it is my conviction that we shall lose nothing by re-examin-

ing Wasserkopf. If he fails he will place us in an awkward position ; therefore he must not fail. He has—shall I say ?—pursued advanced studies in the school of life. We will not make our questions too difficult—agreed, gentlemen ? We are dealing with a sly, crafty individual, who will try to get the better of us—and his money back—by hook or crook. We must checkmate him.

THE PHYSICS MÄSTER. How ?

THE MATHEMATICS MÄSTER. By sticking together. The object is to prevent him from failing, because if he fails he succeeds. That we must stop. If he fails, tomorrow there will be two more former pupils, and the next day a dozen. We must back each other up, gentlemen, so that this painful affair does not become a pedagogical scandal. We will ask him questions. Whatever his answers, we agree beforehand that they are correct.

THE HISTORY MÄSTER. Who will decide ?

THE MATHEMATICS MÄSTER. I, if you will permit me. Mr. Principal, let us proceed with the examination. We will show the former pupil that we too can be shrewd !

THE PRINCIPAL. (*ringing ; uneasily*) Isn't there a chance of something going wrong ? Suppose it gets into the newspapers—

THE MATHEMATICS MÄSTER. Leave it to us.

THE PRINCIPAL. (*to the servant, who has appeared*) Show in Herr Wasserkopf.

Unit 3

(*He enters, without waiting to be shown in. He is most truculent. His hat is over one ear ; he greets nobody ; he keeps his hands thrust into his pockets and stares insolently.*)

THE STAFF (*bowing, heartily*). How do you do ?

WASSERKOPF. Who the hell are you ? Sit down, you loafers !

(*He grins, waiting to be thrown out.*)

THE PRINCIPAL. How dare you—

THE MATHEMATICS MÄSTER. (*interrupting*) Please ! (*He turns to the others.*) Sit down, you loafers ! (*They sit, greatly astonished. He turns to WASSERKOPF.*) My dear sir, the greeting you just given us shows that you understand the patriarchal manners which we

impress upon everybody in this institution. Exactly as in the days of the medieval humanists, teachers and pupils meet here on a footing of perfect equality. You have shown us, in the most tactful way, that you approve of our customs. That is good of you, and I am sure my colleagues will agree that the pupil Wasserkopf, who appears before us for re-examination, need not be examined in what appertains to gentlemanliness. Instead we waive examination in that subject, and mark him 'Excellent.'

THE PRINCIPAL. (*understanding at once*) Quite right ! Quite right ! (*He writes*) 'Manners : Excellent'.

THE STAFF. Agreed ! Agreed !

WASSERKOPF. (*puzzled, then shrugging his shoulders*) All right, if you say so. What the hell... ! I don't give a damn for the lot of you. My being gentlemanly isn't going to pass this examination. Let me fail as quickly as possible, and give me my money. Everything else is just damned nonsense.

THE PRINCIPAL. (*flatteringly*) Speaking for the staff, we agree with you. Your exquisite courtesy will not affect us one way or the other. We will examine you, and will be guided entirely by your replies to our questions. Take notice of that.

WASSERKOPF. All right ; carry on ! Let's hear the questions. I need money. (*He takes off his coat and hitches up his sleevebands*). Go to it ! Ask me questions, professors—I mean, long-eared asses ! I'd like to see you get a single correct answer out of me.

THE PRINCIPAL. The examination will begin. History. Herr Schweifer ?

THE HISTORY MASTER. (*moving to the centre of the table and indicating a chair facing it*) Herr Wasserkopf, won't you be seated ?

WASSERKOPF. (*staring at him insolently, arms akimbo*) To hell with a seat ! I'll stand.

(THE HISTORY MASTER is disconcerted, and shows it, but THE MATHEMATICS MASTER leaps into the breach.)

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. Bravo ! Excellent ! Herr Wasserkopf wished us to understand two things. He will dispense with a formal written examination and will answer orally. Good ! He will not be seated ; he will stand. Also good. It follows that his physical condition is splendid, and I take it upon myself to award him

an 'Excellent' in physical culture. I ask the Principal, who teaches that subject, to concur.

THE PRINCIPAL. Quite right. (*He writes*) 'Physical Culture : Excellent.'

THE STAFF. Agreed ! Agreed !

WASSERKOPF. (*energetically*) No ! (*He sits ; he grins*.) You caught me once, didn't you ? Well, you won't do it again. From now on I'll have my ears open.

THE PRINCIPAL. (*writing*) 'Alertness : Very Good.'

THE HISTORY MASTER. 'Perseverance : Unusual.'

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. 'Logic : Excellent.'

WASSERKOPF. Get on with your questions !

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. (*to THE PRINCIPAL*) 'Ambition : Boundless.' (*THE PRINCIPAL nods and writes*.)

THE HISTORY MASTER. (*scratching his head*) Yes, yes, just a minute. (*THE OTHER MASTERS look at him with concern*.)

WASSERKOPF. What's the matter', Schwefer ? Aren't you prepared ?

THE HISTORY MASTER. A moment !

WASSERKOPF. Oh, you can't think of a question that's easy enough ? You were always a numskull.

THE HISTORY MASTER. (*the idea arrives : triumphantly*) Candidate, answer this question : How long did the Thirty Years' War last ?

WASSERKOPF. Thirt—(*He interrupts himself*). I mean to say, I don't know.

THE HISTORY MASTER. Please answer my questions ! I am sure you know ! Give me an answer ! (*WASSERKOPF thinks with eyebrows drawn together, THE PHYSICS MASTER tiptoes to him and whispers loudly, 'Thirty years.'* THE GEOGRAPHY MASTER *winks at him and holds up ten fingers three times*.) Well, well ?

WASSERKOPF. Mr. Principal, this is no way to run an examination. (*He indicates THE PHYSICS MASTER*.) That fellow is trying to make me cheat.

THE PRINCIPAL. I shall deal with this decisively. (*To THE PHYSICS MASTER*) Go away !

(THE PHYSICS MASTER *slinks back to his place.*)

WASSERKOPF. (*after much thought*) How long did the Thirty Years' War last ? Was that the question ?

THE HISTORY MASTER. Yes, yes !

WASSERKOPF. (*grinning*) I know ! Exactly seven metres ! (*They are paralysed. He looks about in triumph.*) Ha, ha ! Seven metres ! I know it lasted that long. It's possible I'm wrong, and if I am I fail. Seven metres ! Ha, ha ! Seven metres long ! Seven metres ! Please give me back my tuition fees.

(THE MASTERS *look at each other, at their wits' ends.*)

THE HISTORY MASTER. (*decisively*) Seven metres ? Right ! Your answer is excellent.

WASSERKOPF. (*incredulously*) What ? What did you say ?

THE HISTORY MASTER. (*swallowing manfully and watching THE PRINCIPAL out of the corner of his eye*) The answer is correct, as a matter of fact. The candidate has shown us that his thought processes are not merely superficial, and that he has investigated the subject in accordance with modern researches based on—based on—based on—.

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. Relativity, of course. The quantum theory. Planck. Einstein. It's all very simple. (*To THE HISTORY MASTER*) Don't say another word. We understand perfectly. Einstein has taught us that time is as real as space and matter. It consists of atoms, may be synthesized into a unified whole, and may be measured like anything else. Reduce the mass-system to a unit and a year may be represented by a metre, or seven years by seven metres. We may even assert that the Thirty Years' War lasted seven years only because—because—because—

THE HISTORY MASTER. Because actual warfare took place only during half of each day—that is to say, twelve hours out of the twenty-four—and the thirty years at once become fifteen. But not even fifteen years were given up to incessant fighting, for the combatants had to eat—three hours a day, reducing our fifteen years to twelve. And if from this we deduct the hours given up to noonday siestas, to peaceful diversions, to non-warlike activities—

(*He wipes his brow.*)

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. To social distractions, we have left only the time which the candidate has represented by the Einsteinian

equivalent of seven metres. Correct ! I take it upon myself, gentlemen, to propose a grading of 'Very Good' in history. Oof !

(*He too wipes his brow.*)

THE STAFF. Bravo ! Excellent ! He has passed !

(*They congratulate WASSERKOPP.*)

WASSERKOPP. (*objecting*) But I don't see—

THE PRINCIPAL. That ends the examination in history. (*Writing*) 'History : Very Good.' (THE STAFF surround THE HISTORY MASTER and congratulate him.) Now the examination in physics.

(THE PHYSICS MASTER takes the place of THE HISTORY MASTER.)

WASSERKOPP. Now we'll see something, you tricksters !

THE PHYSICS MASTER. (*energetically*) Come, come !

WASSERKOPP. (*defiantly*) Well, what's going to happen ? Ask your questions, or don't. I haven't got any more time to waste. (*He stares at THE PHYSICS MASTER.*) Oh, now I remember you. Do you know what we used to call you behind your back ? (THE PHYSICS MASTER smiles in agony.) We called you the cannibal, because you were always chewing your thumbs, just as you're doing now ! (THE MASTER removes his thumb hastily. *The rest of THE STAFF smile.*) That's what we called you ! Oh, by the way, do you remember the day you tripped and fell flat in the aisle ? Do you know who tied a string across from desk to desk, so you'd do that ? I did it !

THE PHYSICS MASTER. (*furiously*) You ?

WASSERKOPP. Don't get excited, little man. Ask me a hard question instead. Plough me.

THE PHYSICS MASTER. (*controls himself, well aware that WASSERKOPP is trying to irritate him. Very sweetly*) Kind of you—very kind of you. And now, tell me Herr WASSERKOPP, do clocks in church steeples really become smaller as you walk away from them or do they merely appear to become smaller because of an optical illusion ?

WASSERKOPP. What absolute rot ? How should I know ? Whenever I walk away from clocks they get larger ! Invariably ! If I want them to get smaller I turn round and walk right up to them, and then they're not small at all.

THE PHYSICS MASTER. In a word, therefore, in a word—

WASSERKOPP. In a word, therefore, you give me a pain in the neck. You're an ass ! That's my answer.

THE PHYSICS MASTER. (*furiously*) Is that your answer ? (*He controls himself*) Good ! It is correct. (*Turning to THE STAFF*) A difficult answer, but a most brilliant one. I'll explain—that is to say, I'll explain. (*With a sigh, he gets on with it.*) When we talk of the ass we always notice—we always notice—

THE STAFF. (*anxiously*) Yes ? Yes ?

THE PHYSICS MASTER. —that his look is sad. Therefore—(*He thinks. Suddenly triumphant*). I've got it !

WASSERKOPF. (*worried*) What have you got, you whiskered baboon ?

THE PHYSICS MASTER. I've got it, and the answer is right. Why is the look of the ass so sad ? Why, in general, are all of us usually so sad ? Because we are all the victims of illusion. But what illusions can affect the extremely primitive apperceptive powers of an ass ? Obviously the illusions of the senses, for the ass lacks imagination ; and these must be none other than optical illusions, since the ass, like us, observes that objects appear to become smaller as he moves away from them. The candidate has given us a most excellent answer in calling our attention to an animal whose expression is melancholy because its senses are deceptive ; or, to put it in another way, because the apparent decrease in size of an object, in this case a clock, is to be ascribed to optical illusion. The answer was correct. I certify, therefore, that the candidate may be given 'Very Good' in physics.

THE PRINCIPAL. (*writing*) 'Physics : Very Good'.

THE STAFF. Bravo !

(*They surround THE PHYSICS MASTER, slapping him on the back and shaking his hands, while he sinks into his chair, completely exhausted.*)

WASSERKOPF. I protest !

THE PRINCIPAL. (*silencing him with a gesture*) The examination in geography.

(*THE GEOGRAPHY MASTER takes the place facing WASSERKOPF.*)

WASSERKOPF. Just look at him ! The old hypocrite ! How are you, anyhow, nitwit ?

THE GEOGRAPHY MASTER. I beg your pardon ?

WASSERKOPF. My name used to be in your class-book, didn't it ? You old reprobate ! You just wait ! I'll fix you all right !

THE GEOGRAPHY MASTER. Tell me, candidate—

WASSERKOPF. I'll tell you ! I'll tell You ! Oh, how I used to hate you eighteen years ago !

THE GEOGRAPHY MASTER. (*imperturbably*) Please tell me what city of the same name is the capital of the German province of Brunswick ?

WASSERKOPF. What a dumb question ! The answer's part of the question.

THE GEOGRAPHY MASTER. (*pleased*) Isn't it ? And the answer—what is it ?

WASSERKOPF. 'Same', of course. That's the answer. If the name of the city is the same, then the name of the city is 'Same'. Right ? If it isn't I fail, and you refund my tuition fees.

THE GEOGRAPHY MASTER. The answer is correct. The name of the city is 'Same'. Gentlemen, the candidate shows exceptional knowledge of the history of the city Brunswick. There is a legend that once, as the Emperor Barbarossa was riding into the city, he met a young peasant girl who was munching a bun, and whose mouth was full. He called out to her, 'God bless you. What's the name of this city ?' and the peasant girl answered, 'Same to you, sir'. Then she stopped, because her mouth was full, and the Emperor laughed, and said 'Ho, ho ! So the name of the city is "Same" ?' And for many years, thereafter, he never referred to Brunswick except by that title. (*He turns, to wink solemnly at his colleagues.*) The answer is excellent. The candidate is entitled to a grade of 'Excellent' in geography.

(*He returns to his place, to be showered with congratulations.*)

THE PRINCIPAL. (*writing*) 'Geography : Excellent.' Thus far the candidate has come through with flying colours. Only the examination in mathematics is left. Should he pass that he will have passed the entire examination.

WASSERKOPF. (*nervously*) I'm going to be more careful now. (THE MATHEMATICS MASTER *takes his place facing WASSERKOPF*. THE OTHER MASTERS are much worried, but THE MATHEMATICS MASTER assures them with a gesture that they may depend on him.) So here you are, old stick-in-the-mud ! Do you know we used to call you 'old stick-in-the-mud' behind your back ? You'd better brush up your wits if you think you're going to put one over on me. I'll start off by telling you a few things about mathematics : two times two is five,

and I make up my own multiplication tables as I go along. And if you add eight apples and two pears the answer is twenty-seven apricots. That's my system, and you'll see me use it. To hell with mathematics ! 'Answer excellent' ? 'Answer very good' ? 'Answer correct' ? Not this time. It will be simpler if you say you aren't prepared, and let me fail.

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. (*forcibly*) You must not joke about a serious examination. I'm going to ask you two questions. One of them is easy ; the other is hard.

WASSERKOPF. (*imitating him*) One of them is easy ; the other is hard. The same old stick-in-the-mud that you always were ! I remember the pictures of you we used to draw on the board—

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. (*interrupting*) If this were an examination in art you would be marked excellent. (*He pauses, and WASSERKOPF is suddenly silent.*) But we are dealing with mathematics. The easy question : If we represent the speed of light by x , and the distance of the star Sirius from the sun by y , what is the circumference of a one-hundred-and-nine-sided regular polyhedron whose surface area coincides with that of the hip-pocket of a State railway employee whose wife has been deceiving him for two years and eleven months with a regimental sergeant-major of hussars ?

THE STAFF. (*much upset*) But look here, Professor ! Professor !

THE PRINCIPAL. Professor !

WASSERKOPF. Don't interfere with him ! (*To THE MATHEMATICS MASTER*) Will you repeat the question ?

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. No. Either you paid attention, or you did not. Either you know the answer, or you don't. Tell me the answer, because if you don't know it—

WASSERKOPF. Of course I know it ! Naturally I know it ! I'll tell you : two thousand six hundred and twenty-nine litres. Exact. No fractions. And now did I give you the correct answer ? (*He chuckles*) I've given you an answer which is too good !

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. No. The answer is wrong. The correct answer is two thousand six hundred and twenty-eight litres, and not twenty-nine. (*He turns to THE PRINCIPAL.*) I refuse to pass the candidate. Mark him 'Failure'.

WASSERKOPF. (*bounding*) I told you so ! I told you so !

THE PRINCIPAL. (*thunderstruck*) Professor ! Professor !

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. I'm sorry. It is true that his error amounted to less than a tenth of a per cent, in the total, but it was an error. He fails.

WASSERKOPF. My tuition fees ! My tuition fees !

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. In my opinion the candidate's request is reasonable. Now that I have satisfied myself he cannot pass our examination it is his right to recover the monies which were paid us.

WASSERKOPF. That's so ! That's right ! Give me the money !
(*The Staff stare as if the heavens had fallen.*)

THE PRINCIPAL. (*furiously, to THE MATHEMATICS MASTER*) Is that what you think ?

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. Absolutely. This is a good school. It is our duty to see that nothing ever injures its reputation. How much do we owe you, Herr WASSERKOPF ?

WASSERKOPF. (*greedily, forgetting everything else*) I'll tell you exactly. I attended this school for six years in all. During the first three years the fee was 150 crowns quarterly. Total for three years 1,800. During the second three years the fee was 400 crowns semi-annually. Total : 2,400 and 1,800 is 4,200. Examinations fees, 240 crowns 95 heller. Certificates, documents, books, stamp taxes, 1,241 crowns 43 heller. Total : 5,682 crowns 38 heller. Incidentals, stationery, notebooks, 768 crowns 12 heller. Grand total : 6,450 crowns 50 heller. Knock off the heller and call it crowns.

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. (*checking with paper and pencil as WASSERKOPF calls out the amounts*) Exactly !

WASSERKOPF. Exactly ! You can rely on it.

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. It's right. There's no question of it. It's right to the smallest detail. (*He offers WASSERKOPF his hand.*) I congratulate you ! That was my difficult question !

WASSERKOPF. (*not understanding*) What ?

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. (*to THE PRINCIPAL*) I certify that the candidate passes in mathematics. His answer to the easy question was a very little out of the way ; but his answer to the difficult question—how much the refund should be—was exactly correct. Herr Wasser-kopf is really a mathematical genius.

WASSERKOPF. (*striking his forehead*) So you did put one over on me !

Unit 4

THE PRINCIPAL. (*rising*) I present the results of the examination. Herr Wasserkopf has passed with distinction in every subject, and has again shown that he is entitled to the certificate we awarded him on his graduation. Herr Wasserkopf, we offer our congratulations—accepting a large share of them for ourselves for having taught you so excellently. And now that we have verified your knowledge and your abilities—(*he makes an eloquent gesture*) get out before I have you thrown out !

(*He rings for the servant. The following speeches are nearly spoken simultaneously.*)

THE HISTORY MASTER. So I'm numskull, am I ? Say it again and I'll show you what's what !

THE PHYSICS MASTER. I'm a cannibal ? What ? And you were the one who tied a string across the aisle—

THE GEOGRAPHY MASTER. Hypocrite ? Nitwit ? Ass ? Me ?

THE MATHEMATICS MASTER. Old stick-in-the-mud ?

THE SERVANT. (*entering*) Yes, sir ?

THE PRINCIPAL. (*indicating WASSERKOPF*) Remove that object ! (THE SERVANT seizes WASSERKOPF by the collar and the seat of his trousers and rushes him off. THE PRINCIPAL turns to THE STAFF and beams). Thank you, gentlemen, for your magnificent co-operation. In the future it will be our proudest boast that in this school a pupil simply cannot fail !

(*They shake hands and slap each other's back.*)

CURTAIN



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